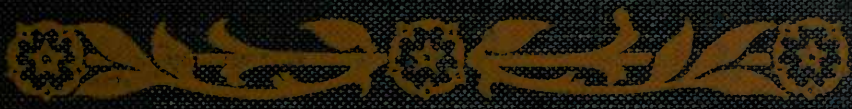
THREADS



FRANK STAYTON

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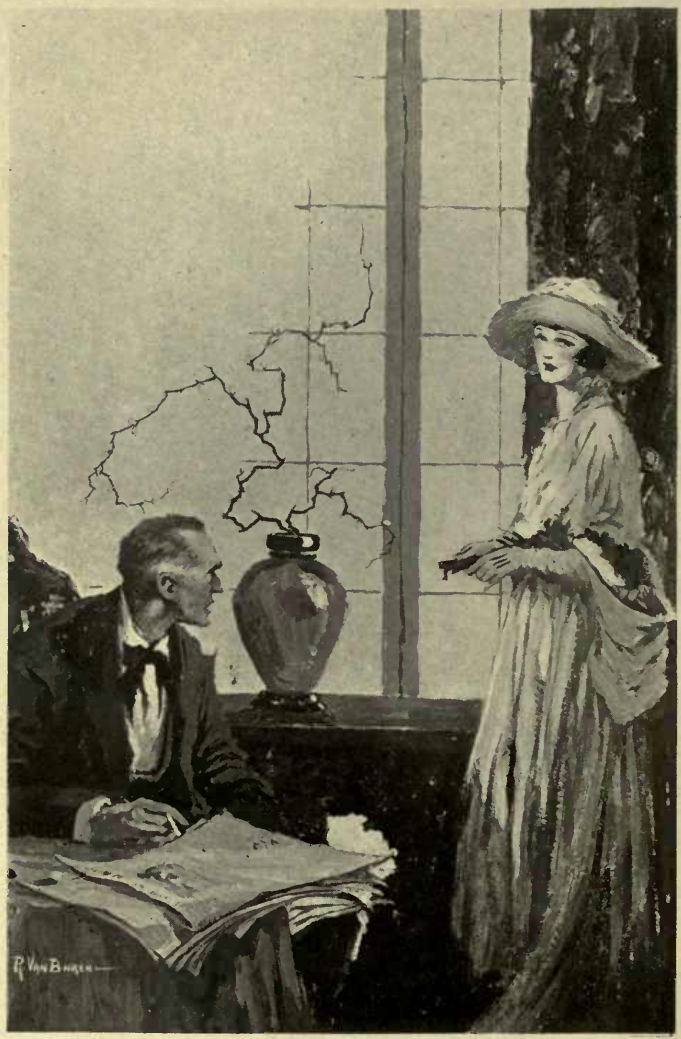

She flushed under his close scrutiny

THREADS

BY

FRANK STAYTON

NEW YORK
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"OLD ENGLAND"

Old England 's just an island, if geography is truthful,
But she is n't very sociable, nor affable, nor youthful;
And though you 're sometimes furious, and often disapproving,
There is something in old England that you simply can't help loving!

The men who made her what she is were doubtless human too;
They laughed and quarrelled, fought and groused, as you and others do;
But when the foe was at the gate they promptly would prepare
To meet that foe—and die perhaps—as many do "out there"!

They thought "the Staff was rotten," and they hated red-tape rules;
They wondered if the Home Front was made up of utter fools;
They grumbled at the rations, and they slanged the Government.
But they held their line of trenches till their arrows all were spent;

They braved the dangers of the deep in ships of tiny size;
They hung aloft in howling gales, and fought their enemies;
They played the game as sailors did, and as they do to-day,
Though they did n't have much fun and had extremely little pay.

The men who made old England had n't time to talk a lot;
They gave themselves, took on the job, and little thanks they got;
Later their sons, renouncing sport, would step into their shoes;
For when you serve old England you must never pick and choose!

Through centuries and centuries, firm-planted at the helm,
A silent grim minority talk could not overwhelm
Has steered the ship of England through the breakers and the shoals
While politicians cackled and the public played at bowls. . . .

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THREADS

CHAPTER I

The Patriots Give me a trusty sword, and bid me fight!
[*Crowd applauds.*
The Grouser: Give me a fountain-pen, and leave to write!
[*Crowd groans.*
The Profiteer (his finger to his nose): Here is my chance to bleed my country white! [*Crowd chuckles.*
Pro Patria, Act 2, Scene I.

A MAN was seated in the corner of a third-class smoking compartment of the London Express on a morning in the early summer of 1917, gazing through the grimy windows and occasionally catching his breath as though he were interested in the novelty of the scene; though, to the experienced traveler, novelty was lacking. The engine of the London and South-Western Railway, with its customary craze for economy in coal, labored heavily up a moderate gradient.

The orderly appearance of the fields, the well-groomed gardens and hedges, the red roofs and the trim stations, unnoticed by the newspaper-reading majority, appeared to strike the man in the corner with surprise. He lowered the window and, removing his hat, allowed the soft

summer wind to play around his closely cropped iron-gray hair. He turned his head to observe his fellow-travelers: they were engrossed by their favorite organs of public opinion. The sight of some feminine farm-workers moving milk-cans on a country station astonished him; but his surprise did not appear to be infectious. He turned back to the panorama of fields and woods and villages, fascinated by the sleepy prettiness of the scene.

By the summer of 1917 England had accepted the war as a habit. Khaki was everywhere. In this particular train on a Saturday morning there was quite an appreciable amount of khaki on week-end leave, together with a picturesque sprinkling of blue from Weymouth. Though traveling was being discouraged by the powers that be, the train was full. The first-class coaches contained a sprinkling of naval and military officers, but were chiefly filled by a loud-voiced, expensively dressed, self-satisfied type with money to burn—men who were doing well out of the war, who would be sorry when the war was over, who had risen from obscurity to commercial prosperity, and, having achieved greatness,—the kind of greatness that makes first-class traveling and expensive hotels and restaurants a habit,—intended to hold to what they had secured. The war that had brought death and mutilation, poverty and sickness to the men in

the trenches had produced undreamed-of prosperity among those who had stayed at home.

But the man in the corner was as yet ignorant of the miracle that had occurred in the lives of so many of his fellow-countrymen. He merely gazed at these curious creatures, amazed at their manners and customs and their shrieking prosperity. Some of them picked their teeth and made strange sucking noises with their mouths; they smoked huge cigars from which they neglected to remove the labels. In the luncheon-car they drank champagne. In a word, they swanked.

Some of the officers—especially the worried-looking elderly second lieutenants—contented themselves with a sandwich: money was evidently scarce. Only those on consolidated pay, or the young and unmarried, could afford to lunch in the restaurant-car. The man in the corner listened eagerly to the scraps of talk that fell from the lips of his companions as, their newspapers digested and allowed to fall on the floor, they lighted pipes or cigarettes and glanced suspiciously at each other in the approved British fashion. A commercial traveler, with great frankness and an apparent love of hearing his own voice, started the ball rolling by an account of his successes in towns like Weymouth and Plymouth. "But give me the North!" he exclaimed, picking his teeth with a match. "They 'll buy whatever you offer—

provided it 's expensive. They 're eating money up there. Gramophones, grand pianos, silk handkerchiefs, sports-coats, furs, jewelry—anything that costs money and looks as though it did!"

"Why don't they put it into the War Loan?" asked a little man with his back to the engine.

"War Loan my eye!" The commercial traveler frothed with contempt. "They can't *wear* War Loan; they can't exhibit it on the parlor table, or furnish the drawing-room with it! Why do you suppose they want all these things? To use? Huh! They would n't use 'em all in twenty years. No! They want 'em to show their neighbors how rich they are. It 's swank—that 's all! Do you suppose a munition worker wants two pianos so 's he can play one with each hand? Not much! He wants *two* because the man across the street only has *one*. I tell you, the war's good for trade. *I 'm* not grumbling."

A soldier with a gold stripe on his arm turned quickly from his grim contemplation of the corridor. "You ought to see some o' the villages on the Somme—and round Wipers. . . . And then to look at that!" He indicated the peaceful-looking red roofs of Basingstoke. "My Gawd! And you talk of war bein' good for trade!" He turned away with a snort and lighted a cheap cigarette. There was silence in the compartment for a moment.

The soldier with the gold stripe was returning to France by the afternoon leave train. The foregoing remark was his only contribution to the general conversation.

The commercial traveler continued his account of the prosperity of the country, but in a slightly lowered voice. A young and healthy exempted indispensable reading the *Daily News* whistled self-consciously. The man in the corner looked puzzled as his eyes drank in the beauty of the Elvetham woods.

He wanted to ask questions, but somehow his lips refused to put his thoughts into words. He felt a curious shyness of his fellow-men. He wanted to get into conversation with the soldier wearing the gold stripe; he had a strong desire to shake him by the hand, and to thank him for helping to make the present position possible. What would England be if it were n't for the men in the trenches? A shambles, a ruin, a memory. Would the munition workers be able to buy gramophones, the commercial traveler be selling sports-coats? He laughed grimly to himself. It was England all over—a nation of individualists, each wrapped up in his own affairs. It always had been, it always should be.

The train was approaching the outer suburbs. How would London strike a stranger? A stranger. Yes, indeed, he was a stranger! After

fifteen years. Fifteen years—an eternity. He felt like a man in a dream who almost dreaded the awakening. He rose and made his way along the corridor to the lavatory to wash his hands. He looked at himself in the mirror.

He saw a young man's face grown old, with lines under the eyes, on the forehead, between the eyebrows; an expression saved from bitterness by the blessed twinkle of humor that fifteen years had failed to kill.

With its customary absent-mindedness, the London and South-Western Railway had forgotten the necessity for a towel, so he was obliged to dry his hands on a handkerchief. It was a new one, obviously purchased in a hurry. He returned to his compartment. The soldier with the gold stripe had risen from his seat and was standing in the corridor with his arms on the guiding-rail. His face was almost expressionless.

The withdrawal of the soldier with the gold stripe had loosened the tongue of the commercial traveler. He was swanking more than ever. "They can't touch us," he was saying. "They know they must n't interfere with trade or they 'll be in the cart financially."

"They try-bunals can be worked," said a farmer. "I 'm on a try-bunal myself. I says to the other farmers: 'You exempt *my* men and I 'll exempt *yours!*' Give and take! That 's our

policy. I got all my sons exempted." He chuckled. It was a score to him in the great game, the score of the individualist against that queer abstraction called the government—otherwise "they."

The train ran into Vauxhall, and the man in the corner breathed a sigh of relief. His first impression of England in the third year of war was beginning to irritate him. He would be glad to get away from these amazingly self-satisfied egotists.

The train moved on, halted, moved on a few yards, and finally worried its way into the station. The man in the corner gasped. Could this amazingly spacious erection be Waterloo Station? Had there been an earthquake? What had happened to the London and South-Western Railway? Fifteen years before Waterloo Station had been a time-honored joke. A comedian had only to mention Waterloo Station—as, later on, he had only to mention the *Daily Mail*—to be rewarded by a huge laugh and possibly a round of applause. Waterloo Station had been a ramshackle, tumble-down, depressing wilderness of illusive platforms and dazed officials. You arrived there with five minutes to catch your train, and it took you half an hour to discover which platform it departed from.

He asked a porter what was the reason for the holes in the glass roof. "Shrapnel," replied the porter surlily. "By 'r leave, please," and he moved on with his barrow, avoiding the legs of passengers by a miracle of dexterity.

His interrogator moved slowly along the thronged platform, with eyes searching the crowd for a familiar face, finally accosting an exquisitely groomed young man who was standing near the exit, smoking a cigarette and dabbing his forehead with a spotless handkerchief.

"I think you must be my son!" he said. "You 're so absurdly like your mother."

CHAPTER II

Messenger: A stranger 's here to learn our point of view.
Britannicus: Let him come in! . . . But wake me not again!
Tell him our secrets, show him ev'rything. . . .
Make him an Englishman! . . . But let me sleep!
Pro Patria, Act 1.

On the same afternoon a girl was lounging on the window-seat of the living-room of a roomy modern house of the Voysey type that stood on the high ground near the Chalfonts. The room, containing most of the features usually photographed for *Country Life* ("Lesser Country Houses of England"), had casement windows overlooking a stretch of lawn and a rose garden which was reaching a kind of modified maturity. The general atmosphere suggested comfort, a staff of expensive, well-trained servants, and a comfortable balance in the bank; and the girl who was lounging on the window-seat, making an extremely attractive picture as she dipped into a novel which bored her and a box of chocolates which did n't, suited the atmosphere. Her pretty summer frock had been made by an artist, and she wore it with genius. Though not yet twenty, her manner was assured without being aggressive;

and she pronounced her vowels as they were meant to be pronounced—which rendered her eminently desirable at a time when thousand-guinea automobiles were almost entirely surrounded by cockney accents.

She looked up as the musical note of a seventy-horsepower car announced its coming; and, being a girl, allowed her book to slide on to the floor unheeded as her hand went instinctively to her hair. After a moment or two an ornamental parlor-maid announced "Mr. Jordan, Miss!" and stood aside to allow the visitor to enter; then retired to strong tea and Mr. Charles Garvice in the servants' hall.

Jefferson Jordan was immaculately dressed for a call in the West End of London; that, and the fact that he was not more than thirty-five, betrayed his nationality. He was of the type that, had he been English, could not have remained out of khaki. Tall, rather lanky, with a prominent chin, restless hands, keen gray eyes full of energy, easily elated, still more easily depressed, doggedly determined, anxious to hear all points of view, a trifle awed by Olive's assured manner and opinions, it is scarcely necessary to add that he first saw the light from the interior of a farm-house in the State of Michigan, U.S.A. For he had too much enthusiasm, he was too polite, too eager to listen to other people's views, and

was too obviously in awe of the eternal feminine ever to be mistaken for an Englishman. An Englishman is never in awe of a woman; he may hate her, fear her, despise her, adore her, desire her, detest her; but even when hating her, fearing her, despising her, adoring her, desiring her, or detesting her, he invariably insists that his is the superior sex. American men know it, but are chivalrous enough to conceal the fact. Hence the powers of fascination an Englishman possesses for the women of all nations, and the tragedy of the American husband working without a vacation to provide his wife and daughters with trips to Europe and an introduction to Madame Paquin.

Five years' residence in London had taught Jordan to doubt some of his own theories and to be prepared for the cold douche of English prejudice and convention. An American man who can survive five years' residence in London usually becomes more English than the English, except for the fact that occasionally his native humor slips its leash and, like a dog without its collar, has a good time while it can.

Take the British national type of humor—the comedian with the red nose. An Englishman laughs at the red nose; an American laughs at the comedian.

Jordan removed his right-hand glove before

shaking hands with Olive. His nails were exquisitely manicured, and his hands long and sensitive. "It 's bully to see you out of uniform," he said.

Olive was a V.A.D. A pretty V.A.D., provided her hair is not the wrong shade of auburn, had no objection to the indoor uniform; but there were limits even to a V.A.D.'s sense of patriotism, and the regulation hat and coat was rarely popular.

"I left the office early, 'phoned for my auto, and flagellated the speed limit to a perfectly criminal extent," continued Jordan, seating himself on the window-seat with a sigh of relaxation. "But I 'm here and you 're here, so everything in the garden 's lovely—including that bully frock you 're wearing!"

"Yes, it *is* rather ducky," replied Olive, glancing at the arrangement of her skirt. Then she looked up at him with a slight frown. "But will you be offended if I say something?"

"I 'm crazy to hear you say anything," said Jordan.

Olive hesitated. "People don't wear tophats and frock-coats for week-ends in the country," she asserted.

Jordan sighed. "It is n't done?" he queried. Olive shook her head determinedly. "Another one on *me*," he murmured. "Such a lot of things

are n't done—over on this side. It would take a pretty bright man most of the day and half the night to get acquainted with all the things that can't be done—in England."

"There 's nothing positive in our code," said Olive; "but there are quite two million negatives."

"I guess I 'm still in the third standard," sighed Jordan. "Oh, hell!" He apologized humbly for the exclamation.

"Please don't apologize," said Olive, smiling. "I 'm what you might call a whole-hogger in swears. I don't like polite substitutes. If a man *says* hell, he probably *means* hell."

Jordan looked pensive. "I wonder will I ever learn the two million forms of etiquette a man has to acquire before he can get elected to the kind of club that 's as good as a pass-in check to Buckingham Palace?"

"If a man is n't born to it he rarely achieves it," said Olive.

"You 're not too optimistic, are you?" replied Jordan. "I don't blame you," he added quickly. "It 's all a question of viewpoint. I had my business training in Noo York; and a man that banks on delivering the goods in Noo York has to get in ahead of the rest with noo schemes for catching the public eye and the public ear. But over here, if a man gets hold of a cute little dodge for advertising a business, you conservative

British accuse him of not being 'good form'; and it 's just a little discouraging," he concluded, rubbing his chin meditatively.

Olive looked at him reproachfully. "It is a trifle upsetting to be faced in the tube with a long poster that says: 'Where does your best boy buy his pants?' "

"But the cinch is in the answer: 'Why, at Rattigan's, of course! Where else could he buy them?' " replied Jordan triumphantly.

"It might be taken in two ways," murmured Olive demurely.

Jordan became a little aggressive. "What do you object to in that advertisement?" he inquired sharply.

"Only to the *tone* of it," she replied in her most insular manner—a manner that has been responsible on more than one occasion for loosening the grasp of "hands across the sea."

"Does n't it *get* there?" said Jordan eagerly and with enthusiasm . "Is n't it crystallized into a few words? Would Rattigan pay me fifty thousand dollars a year to be his advertising manager because I was his old college chum? No, sir-ee! He pays me because it *pays* him to pay me. My ideas are worth big money to him—though they *are* bad form, and bourgeois, and everything that the British appear to dislike," he concluded with some heat.

Olive glanced at him with an annihilating smile. "Don't get ratty!" she said. "Have a candy?"

She offered the box. They were too tempting to be resisted—especially by a man who had conscientious objections to smoking when ladies were present. He was so chivalrous in his dealings with women that he was in serious danger of becoming what the middle classes call a "perfect gentleman." But Olive had few prejudices where men were concerned; there were only two types she cordially detested—the man who calls his wife "Little Woman" and the man who calls her "Mother."

Jordan took a candy. He tasted it, and his eyes brightened. "That 's one of Rattigan's 'First and Last,' " he asserted.

"Rather!" replied Olive; "as you would say, they lick creation!"

"I boomed them," said Jordan with pardonable pride; "and now they 're one of Rattigan's chief lines."

"I 'm glad you came to-day," remarked Olive; "we 're all a bit nervy and on edge."

"What 's the trouble?" Jordan inquired. "Been exceeding the ration?"

"Oh, no!" replied Olive; "it 's something serious."

This was in the days when a polite government was afraid to impose economy in food consump-

tion on its voters, so spent a great deal of money and wasted a lot of time in begging the public to be good. Naturally, the public failed to take it seriously. Politicians in Rolls-Royce cars preaching economy in petrol, Cabinet Ministers with five thousand a year urging farm-laborers and small clerks with huge families to eat less bread, may not have been an impressive spectacle, but they afforded the necessary comic relief.

"Have another candy," said Olive. Jordan helped himself. There was evidently no shortage in sugar for making sweets, in spite of the fact that the wealthy classes were quietly and unobtrusively collecting as much as they could lay their hands on. John Osborne Wynn afterward referred to it as "taking thought to add a cubic to their stature"; but his family failed to follow the analogy.

"I don't know what *is* the matter," continued Olive. "I've been trying to guess. But I've given it up as a bad job."

"Given up what?" asked Jordan, hesitating between a *marron glacé* and an almond caramel.

"Speculating," replied Olive. "Mother's hideously nervy and inclined to hysteria. Goodness knows what has upset her. You haven't been quarreling with her, have you?—about Seppy or anything?" she added, suddenly looking up at him.

When you are in love with a girl of eighteen, it is a little embarrassing to be suspected of being in love with her mother—more especially when your innate chivalry forbids your denying the one or asserting the other. Olive and her brothers were so accustomed to their mother's apparent powers of fascination over men that they had accepted the fact that any man who was a regular visitor at the house came to see Amelia and not Olive. It was not that Amelia was more beautiful than her daughter, but she had more of that intangible quality known to patrons of the drama as sex-attraction.

"Why, no!" replied Jordan hesitatingly. "Why should I quarrel with your mother about Colonel Packinder?"

"I don't know," mused Olive, a tiny smile playing about her lips. "But it 's done," she added mischievously. "Seppy 's always more or less in the spotlight, and the others sometimes get annoyed."

Jordan unconsciously took another candy.

Olive continued: "Well, anyway, this morning, quite early—just as Arthur was going to the station—she called him into her room, and there they remained for nearly an hour. Arthur came out looking very frazzled, and I asked him what was up. All he said was: 'Mother will tell you.' Men are so hopeless when a girl wants to know

a thing right away. He disappeared upstairs, and a few minutes later he went off to the station in the car. He has n't returned, and mother has shut herself up in her bedroom, and she did n't even appear at lunch. So you see there *must* be something up, and I have n't an idea what it is."

Jordan pondered. He pondered, in the first place, because he was terrified at butting in, and, in the second place, because a caramel (one of Rattigan's "First and Last") had stuck firmly and securely to his teeth, and the problem of removing it required a lot of solving. Eventually nature solved it, and he ventured a remark.

"Your mother can't be in financial difficulties?" he suggested.

"Oh, no!" replied Olive. "The uncle who left us all the money we have did n't give her the chance to speculate; he tied it all up in gilt-edged securities. Whatever it is, it is n't *money.*"

Jordan thought some more. "You belong to the gentler sex," he remarked. "What would worry *you?*"

"I might worry over my handicap at golf; or if my dressmaker went bankrupt; or if tight skirts came in just after I had bought my summer frocks," replied Olive pensively; "but it 's nothing like that mother 's worrying about."

Jordan coughed delicately. "It—it is n't a sad anniversary—or anything like that? Your father,

for instance? How long ago is it since he died?"

"About fifteen years, I think," said Olive. "I don't quite remember."

"In England?" inquired Jordan.

"I don't know," replied Olive.

"Is n't that rather curious?" said Jordan. "I thought English people were far more particular about *who* they were than about *what* they were, and that fathers were more important than children."

"Mother is n't very communicative," answered Olive. "Even Arthur did n't remember him very well; but Arthur was very delicate as a boy, and I believe he was sent to an aunt in Switzerland when he was about seven and did n't come back until he was over ten."

Olive frowned. Mysteries were distasteful enough in any case; but mysteries that required explanations to outsiders were hateful. She looked out of the window. "Mother 's in the garden—with Jimmy," she observed. "Perhaps she 's going to face the inevitable and tell us all about it."

Jordan took up his gloves and prepared to depart. "I 'm going to visit my new home," he remarked, looking at his watch hurriedly. "Your English plumbers would drive a saint to blasphemy. I 'm going to have a heart-to-heart talk with the foreman. He thinks I 'm crazy, but I

know he is—and I 'm going to make him suspect."

"You can't go without speaking to mother," said Olive. "Let 's go into the garden." And Jordan, carrying his hat and gloves, followed her.

Where an Englishman will invariably walk a yard or two ahead of a woman, an American will remain a couple of paces in the rear. An Englishman will say "Come on!" where an American says "After you!"

It is these little distinctions of nationality that help to make life interesting.

CHAPTER III

Maid: Madam, your husband has returned!
Lesbia: He has a genius for anti-climax.
Pro Patria, Act 1.

AMELIA was the kind of woman who attracted men by showing them her helplessness and their strength; an irritating woman, but lovable, pretty enough to be forgiven her little tyrannies, feminine in the Victorian sense, and inclined to sentimentality and tearfulness in order to gain a point. She had a genuine sense of the duty she owed to her children, but was too fond of referring to the fact. She occasionally surprised her children, but rarely surprised herself; she realized that they considered her high-strung and nervous, fond of admiration, and inclined to be a martyr. Few children know their parents other than superficially.

It never occurred to them that, in spite of her occasionally exasperating ways, she was a woman capable of love, of devotion, of loyalty, and of passion, and that she understood them as they never understood her. That she was in her forty-fifth year few people would believe. Not that age is any criterion in this highly civilized era.

No woman need be considered middle-aged until she is sixty; few women are worth talking to before they are thirty-five; and if a woman knows what colors suit her she can remain at the height of her attractiveness for an indefinite period. Amelia looked thirty, and had no ambition to be taken for twenty-two. If a woman with a grown-up family can look thirty in real life and not merely in the illustrated papers, she can scarcely be considered a negligible quantity. Moreover, she knew how to dress; she never made the fatal mistake of throwing her clothes on anyhow in order to be punctual for a meal. She was never punctual for anything. She never took less than an hour to dress. She never hurried for a train: if she missed her train, there were others. She had an instinct for a background, and invariably acquired the one most suitable. She was an excellent hostess, neither intrusive nor neglectful. She was an even more satisfactory guest; that is to say, she never glanced at the prices when dining at a restaurant. When asked what she would like, she replied without hesitation. Once she had dined or lunched with a man, he could tell to half a crown what the privilege of entertaining her would cost him. If she was beyond his means, he sighed, and entertained someone less expensive. She herself was not sufficiently fond of being entertained to have the additional bother of won-

dering whether her host could afford such extravagance. She took it for granted that he could. In fact, she took most things for granted—including Colonel Septimus Packinder.

But on this particular afternoon she was obviously disturbed. She was endeavoring to talk calmly to her fifteen-year-old son, who was at Harrow. James was a nice boy who had acquired most of the Harrow traditions, but his mother's uneasiness was causing him great discomfort. Hang it all! Suppose she gave herself away? What was a fellow to do? Suppose she started blubbering? Various excuses for a sudden absence darted through his brain.

The sight of his sister Olive coming along the grassy path, followed by Jefferson Jordan, was more than a relief; it was like an answer to a prayer.

Amelia also welcomed the interruption. It is a very curious thing that, when you have a confession to make, you realize that every postponement adds to the difficulties of your task, but that any kind of an interruption is welcome. The person who complains of lack of humor in fiction or drama should study life and people. The more you study the world the more ready you are to believe that it was conceived in a spirit of comic irony.

"I did n't know you were here, Mr. Jordan," said Amelia as she shook hands.

There was a slightly embarrassing pause, which Jordan bridged. "Hallo, Jimmy!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo!" replied Jimmy. "I say, I nearly suggested to old Threpps—he 's my house-master, y' know—to put an ad. in the papers: 'Why don't you send your fool kid to Threpps? *He 'd* knock the stuffing out of him in no time!' I suggested it to several of the fellows, and they said it was as good as a Rattigan ad. in the Baker Street trains."

Jordan grew didactic. "The time is coming, Jimmy," he replied with some gravity, "when everybody will have to advertise—even your politicians."

"My hat!" exclaimed that Harrovian cynic. "There is n't an advertising dodge politicians don't understand. When they 're fed up with advertising themselves, they advertise their wives and children; and when *that* little stunt 's exhausted, they advertise their own incapacity."

Jordan looked pensive. "I guess you 're about right, Jimmy!" he agreed. Then he turned to Amelia. "Excuse me, Mrs. Osborne! I have an appointment to show someone over my house."

"Not an interviewer?" exclaimed Olive.

"Sure," replied Jordan. "He 's bringing a photographer with him: that 's why I 'm all

dressed up with somewhere to go. Rattigan will be mightily pleased; he likes his staff to obtain plenty of publicity. I 'll call in to-morrow and take you out in my car, if I may?" he concluded with that upward inflection that no one but a well-educated American can produce with the same subtle delicacy—an inflection that is like a grace-note in music.

Amelia felt the immenence of the sword of confession hanging over her head, and sighed. "I 'm afraid I can't go, Mr. Jordan," she said regretfully. "But perhaps Olive—" she suggested.

Amelia had in conversation that rather attractive trick of omitting to conclude a sentence. It is a kind of appeal to the intelligence of the person addressed—a compliment.

"That 's too bad," said Jordan, his manner a mixture of chivalrous deference to Amelia's ultimatum, disappointment at her refusal, and agreeable surprise at the delightful alternative. A man who can be convincingly agreeable to two women at the same time, and can make one realize how disappointed he is and the other how delighted he is with so little effort, should go far in whatever career he decides to adopt. But Jordan was sufficiently simple not to realize how popular he was with women.

"If Miss Osborne will honor me—" he began.

"Miss Osborne will consider the matter favorably," replied Olive demurely.

"That 's bully!" said Jordan. "Well, I must say au 'voir, Mrs. Osborne." He shook hands with Olive, a tiny twinkle of amusement in his eye. "Be good, Jimmy," he concluded, grasping that young man's limp and unresponsive hand.

Jimmy, who hated shaking hands unnecessarily, followed him to the drive, saw him start off in the direction of Chorley Wood, not out of politeness, but because he wanted to listen to the running of the new car's engines; then he returned to his mother and sister, whistling "The Wedding Glide."

"I wonder how he manages to wangle his petrol," said Jimmy.

Olive looked at her mother a little uneasily. "Why can't you go to-morrow, mother?" she inquired. "Is Seppy coming over?"

Amelia sighed. The dreaded moment had come. "Children," she said, burying her face in a basket of roses, "I want to have a serious talk with you."

"Why, mother?" asked Olive. "Has anything happened?"

"What makes you ask that question?" replied Amelia, still, woman-like, playing for time.

Olive laughed impatiently. "Well, it 's fairly obvious, is n't it?" she said. "Even Jimmy can't

believe you 're just ordinarily normal to-day, can you, Jimmy?"

James was very matter-of-fact. "I don't know what 'ordinarily normal' is with regard to women," he remarked; "but I jolly well know that the mater 's on the verge of blubbering."

Amelia looked up at him appealingly. "If you knew everything you would n't blame me," she said, making preparations for tears with a dainty but diminutive handkerchief. It was even more difficult than she had anticipated. Children were rather hard nowadays—not very responsive. If only she could go to bed and sleep, and leave things to adjust themselves!

"We don't blame you, my dear," replied Olive calmly; "but we 're perfectly prepared to be told everything. So go ahead!"

"I 'm trying to," said Amelia, nervously swallowing a lump in her throat.

"If you only realized"—she added; then, catching Olive's reproving eye, she pulled herself together and made the plunge.

"Something very strange has happened," she said—"something that will alter the whole scheme of our lives."

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" exclaimed Jimmy, greatly perturbed. "You have n't lost all your tin?"

"Don't be such a goose, Jimmy," said Olive.

"If mother had lost her money she would n't be taking it so calmly!"

Amelia protested. "Calmly?" she echoed. She blew her nose and dabbed her eyes. "Child, you don't understand!"

To tell people they don't understand is no doubt very effective on the stage, judging by the average playwright's predilection for the phrase, but in real life it is apt to prove an irritant—especially to the younger generation. The younger generation understands most things; that is to say, it can read the pessimists without missing a meal.

Amelia recovered herself a little and repeated the unfortunate phrase.

"No, mother," said Olive soothingly; "but, as I said before, I 'm waiting to be told."

"Children are not very sympathetic nowadays," Amelia protested, biting her lip.

"We like to be told the truth," replied Olive with all the directness of the hockey-playing school-girl. "We can't afford to indulge in sentimentality and other early-Victorian luxuries. That 's why we look such guys in full skirts—or some of us do."

"You may have noticed that I have appeared a little upset," continued Amelia; then, seeing Olive's impatient movement, she added: "I had a letter this morning from my solicitor."

"Did he want to marry you?" inquired Jimmy, speaking as a man having authority.

"Good gracious, no!" replied Amelia, a little puzzled. "Why should he?"

James frowned. "I know what lawyers are. Should n't be surprised if he has embezzled your money and wants to marry you so that you 'll hush it up," he suggested.

"Really, Jimmy! Do you believe in nothing?" Amelia protested.

"You should hear what some of the men at Harrow have got to say about lawyers," replied that youthful cynic; "I wonder they dare show their faces—some of them, anyway."

Olive begged her young brother to cease interrupting. "Go on, mother," she added, turning to Amelia. "You had a letter from your solicitor?"

"Giving me some very startling intelligence," continued Amelia unsteadily.

"Quiet, Jimmy," said Olive, seeing that he was about to interrupt. "Yes, mother! What was it?"

Amelia took the plunge; the water looked cold, but it was still colder on the brink. "It was something—it had something to do with your father," she said.

Jimmy whistled reflectively. The conversation was becoming too intimate for him. He fidgeted.

Olive glared at him. She too was embar-

rassed; but curiosity occasionally conquers feminine shrinking.

"You 've scarcely ever spoken to us of our father, have you, mother?" she replied encouragingly. "And we feel it only right that we should know something about him. Won't you tell us, please?"

"I 've been trying to," protested Amelia helplessly; "but you will keep on interrupting."

"Jimmy won't interrupt again," said Olive.

Jimmy became indignant. "I like that," he remarked.

Olive sighed.

Amelia continued. "You are neither of you old enough to remember your father. Olive was scarcely three when he—he left us; and James was born three months afterward."

"Girls always try to push in first," said Jimmy reflectively.

"What did he die of, mother?" asked Olive gently.

Amelia drew a long breath. "He did n't die," she whispered.

"Mother!" said Olive, startled out of her calmness.

"He is still living," continued her mother.

"Great Scotland Yard!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Where is he?"

"He is coming home to-day," replied Amelia. "Arthur has gone to meet him."

Olive and Jimmy looked at each other.

"After fifteen years," said Amelia, gazing into the distance.

"But where has he been all this time?" inquired Jimmy, frowning.

Amelia began to feel flurried. "I wish you children would allow me to tell my story in my own way," she protested weakly.

"Don't interrupt the mater again, Olive," said Jimmy.

"It 's a long story," continued Amelia.

"Then cut it short, mater, and come to the point," replied Jimmy. Man-like, he had a prejudice against agony long drawn out.

"Yes, mother," agreed Olive; "let 's have the facts first and the explanations later."

Amelia sighed. Her children were so direct, so practical. Her own instincts lay in the direction of camouflaging her facts with excuses, explanations and emotions. The younger generation nowadays laugh at a *coup de théâtre;* it has turned mleodrama, so beloved by our fathers, into farce. What their children's tastes will be it is difficult to forecast!

"In the first place," said Amelia, "my name—our name—is not Osborne. Your father's name is John Osborne Wynn."

"Damn it all," said Jimmy. "It 's almost as bad as Mr. Herman Ikenstein becoming McPherson or Curzon."

"When he—he went away, I dropped the Wynn and became Mrs. Osborne," continued Amelia.

"Was there any particular reason, mother?" inquired Olive.

"Yes," replied Amelia. "Your father's uncle, Richard Osborne, from whom we inherited our money, made a point of it. And there was another reason," she added again, biting her lip.

"Another reason for changing our name?" asked Olive, puzzled.

"Yes; it was for *your* sake more than for my own," said Amelia.

Olive reflected. "Fifteen years ago," she murmured. "Nineteen hundred and two."

"I wish I had Olive's head for figures," said Jimmy admiringly.

"Had father done anything you were ashamed of?" inquired Olive.

"No," whispered Amelia.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Jimmy. "A man at Harrow can't be too careful who his father was."

Olive pondered. What was the explanation? Had he expressed political or sociological views a trifle less antiquated than those of the majority?

Had he written a problem play? Had he been mixed up in a scandal? Had he done something?

"His name had come before the public in a very prominent fashion; I wanted the past to be forgotten," said Amelia.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jimmy. "He had n't been mixed up in a divorce case?"

Amelia protested.

"Do you mean he had committed some crime?" asked Olive.

"No!" replied Amelia fiercely. "Children," she pleaded, "I stood by your father, believed in him, encouraged him, and I hope—I *think* I helped him to bear his cruel punishment." She paused for a moment, searching for further words. "I loved him," she added simply.

The simplicity went home. "That 's all right, mater," said Jimmy a little huskily.

"We understand," said Olive, squeezing her mother's hand. There was a slight pause during which Jimmy meditated flight and Olive puzzled her brain for the right word in the right place.

"I have lived on the memory of that love," continued Amelia in a low voice. "I never expected to see him again. Now that I shall see him in less than an hour, I am—frightened."

She shivered a little in spite of the warm afternoon sun.

Olive frowned; her perplexity increased. "Do you mean you are frightened of his finding out that Seppy and Mr. Jordan and most of the men who come here are in love with you?" she asked.

Jimmy pinched her arm. "Shut up!" he whispered. "Women have n't any tact."

Olive rubbed her arm ruefully. Boys were so rough in their methods, and a bare arm with a yellow bruise would scarcely be becoming.

Amelia shivered. "He will find me—different," she said. "He left me a girl—full of love for him, full of longing for him; he will find me a middle-aged woman."

"People often take you for my sister—at least, *men* do," said Olive meditatively.

It was perfectly true. Amelia was the kind of woman time had a habit of overlooking.

"He has n't seen me for fifteen years; he won't know me," continued Amelia.

It was Olive's turn to shiver. She knew it was her duty to soothe her mother's fears, but she was too young and too self-conscious to attempt to be convincing. There is one priceless quality in youth: it never pays compliments.

"What caused this break?" inquired Olive.

"Your father was accused of killing another man; he was convicted and sentenced to be—"

"Don't, mother!" interrupted Olive, catching her breath.

"The sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life," said her mother.

"Was he guilty?" asked Olive in a whisper.

"No," replied Amelia.

"Did you believe him guilty?"

"No," replied Amelia; "I never believed him guilty. He had such a sweet nature. Besides, he *told* me it was n't true, and he never lied—about anything. His passion for the truth made him a little unpopular."

"Then why is he coming back?" inquired Olive, puzzled.

"The Home Office has just found out who committed the crime," said Amelia. "It has taken them fifteen years to find it out!"

"I 've always heard that government departments moved slowly," mused Olive.

"Your father has received the King's pardon. He was released this morning," said Amelia, almost as though she were repeating a lesson.

James, with masculine logic, intervened. "If he was n't guilty, why should the King pardon him?" he inquired.

"I think it 's what they call a legal fiction," said his mother. "I don't exactly know what a legal fiction is, but it 's something that lawyers find very useful at times, and I think this must be one of them."

James grunted scornfully. "I suppose what

he's *really* pardoned for his having consumed government rations for fifteen years without being entitled to them," he suggested.

James was only a school-boy, but he had a wonderful comprehension of the official mind. Even the babes in arms were beginning to distrust the permanent officials in 1917.

"They've robbed him of fifteen years of life," said Olive thoughtfully, "and instead of apologizing they offer to pardon him! The arrogance —the inhumanity of it!"

"When men become machines they naturally become inhuman," said Amelia.

"If the army knew how to dig in as safely as the law does, the war would be over," said Jimmy cynically. "The men at Harrow say that lawyers make two laws—one for themselves and the other for the public."

Olive suddenly became conscience-stricken. "Mother," she said, "I 'm sorry if I 've sometimes been horrid and irritable." She looked at Amelia wonderingly. "How you must have suffered!" she added, a little awed by her mother's expression.

"I don't suffer now," replied Amelia quietly. "I am only dazed. I wish I *could* suffer," she exclaimed, her voice losing its calmness, her nerves quivering.

For fifteen years she had lived in a dream, and

she dreaded the awakening. For fifteen years she had nursed her tragic story, had guarded it from her children, wept over it in secret, and all the time had outwardly lived the life of a woman fond of society and amusement. And now that the story had to be told, the wrappings torn off and the sorrow exposed to the eyes of her children, she was overcome by a sense of unreality, of loss of identity. A man was coming back—after fifteen years in prison. Her husband. But who was he? A stranger? The man she loved? The man she *had* loved—passionately, to whom she had surrendered herself, with whom she had spent a few years of complete happiness. But now—this stranger who was already due at the station—who was he? What would he be like? Could they take up the story where they had dropped it? Were they still the same people? Her brain quivered like a moving picture.

"What the dickens will they say at Harrow?" asked Jimmy suddenly.

"What does it matter what a lot of little boys think?" replied Olive contemptuously.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Jimmy, amazed at such impertinence.

"How will this affect Arthur and Chloe?" pondered Olive.

Arthur, the first-born, was in the Foreign Office. It was he who had gone to meet his re-

leased father. Chloe was the daughter of Lord and Lady Gratham, who lived near Chenies. Their engagement was approved both at Chenies and at Chalfont. Arthur was a budding diplomat and would go far; that is to say, he possessed all the attributes of the pre-war diplomat. But in 1917 England had, as a whole, failed to realize that the world had turned upside-down.

"Lord Gratham is very conservative; he may object to allowing his daughter to marry the son of a man who has spent fifteen years in prison," said Amelia.

"For a crime he did n't commit?" interrupted Olive.

"Lord Gratham is too conservative to reason about anything; he prefers to be guided by precedent," said Amelia.

"I always thought Arthur was a bit of an ass to tie himself up before he had had a good look round," remarked Jimmy.

Amelia sighed. The Grathams would have to be told. The tragedy of her life would become public property; it would be discussed, deplored, argued about. The foundations of her house were crumbling, and life would have to be faced from a new point of view.

Olive's thoughts were in a different key. Chloe was much too modern to mind. Chloe prided herself on her well-balanced judgment. She was

wonderfully lacking in prejudice—the little prejudices on which the whole system of English society is built. Besides, if Chloe could stand Arthur being a Cuthbert, she could stand anything. It was a bitter pill both for Olive and Jimmy that their elder brother lay snugly in a government funk-hole and had no ambition to get into khaki.

Amelia offered no opinion in the matter; Arthur was of age, and had a right to his own views.

Olive turned to her mother. "Of course you 've written to father and told him all about us, and where we are, and everything," she said.

"No," replied Amelia.

"Mother!"

"The last time I saw him, just before his trial, he made me promise that if the worst happened and they found him guilty, and if then by any chance the sentence was changed to—to penal servitude for life, I would, for *your* sake, treat him as though he were—"

Amelia choked a little and bit her lip hard.

Olive gave a gasp of admiration. "I think that was rather fine of him," she said.

"Dashed sporting," echoed Jimmy.

"But how *could* you, mother?" asked Olive.

It was not easy to answer such a question. To Amelia the promise asked of her seemed natural

and right; for her husband had always had an unconventional outlook on life, together with what her own relations considered "curious" ideas. She had adopted his ideas as her own—to save argument. But women, though rebels to law, are slaves to custom, and you rarely find a woman who sincerely differs from the majority in her thoughts. If a man is convinced by his own postulates, he cares nothing for other people's opinions; but women are martyrs to appearances. A woman will scrub floors, but she hates to be seen scrubbing them. A woman is never ashamed of her domestic talents, but she hates to feel that the neighbors realize she has no servants. It is not "service" that women despise, it is the badge of servitude. In country villages, a woman never comes in to scrub, she comes to "oblige." Women are casuists in thought, men are casuists in politics. A woman married to a man with views different from the majority suffers horribly. She may be intensely loyal to her husband, but in her thoughts she is unable to refrain from an occasional regret that he does not think as the others do. Amelia had grown used to her husband's quarrel with convention; she often said, "I 'm sure you're right, dear; but—oh, I *do* wish our friends would realize how mistaken they were."

John, an ironist himself, merely chuckled.

When the crash came, John said to his wife: "If they hang me, or if they shut me up for life, it amounts to the same thing: in either case, you will never see me again. For the sake of our children, try to forget me"; and Amelia accepted this ultimatum as she accepted his views of life. Besides, he had always held extraordinary opinions as to the duties of parents to their children. He hated to see youth used as a crutch for age.

"I was very ill at the time," said Amelia reminiscently; "it was just before Jimmy was born. I could n't fight his will. I gave in—and promised. I have kept my promise, but it has left me numbed—as though all my nerves had suffered from a terrible shock, leaving me almost without feeling."

"Why could n't they find out the truth at the trial?" inquired Olive.

"He was badly defended; the judge was biased, and you know what a British jury is in the hands of a clever lawyer," replied Amelia.

"We know what the jolly old country 's like, now it 's run by lawyers," murmured Jimmy.

CHAPTER IV

First Lord: Your Maj sty, he is mad! He wants to alter things!
King: We will have him examined by our court physician.
First Lord: His contempt for permanent officials is truly painful.
King (graciously): I am always on the side of anything permanent. If you wish, I will cut off his head?
First Lord: Your Majesty, he laughs at our titles and orders!
King (relieved): Then we will create him a duke.

Pro Patria, Act 3.

JOHN OSBORNE WYNN, before the tragic events that led to his fifteen years of exile on the Dorsetshire coast, had been a popular publicist; that is to say, he wrote brilliant comments on the events of the moment for a popular journal. The journal was popular, though the views expressed by Wynn were rarely taken seriously; but his articles were "featured," and people grew accustomed to saying to their friends when anything startling occurred: "I wonder what Wynn will say about it!"

Wynn was in the unfortunate position of being taken seriously when displaying his gift of irony, and of being rewarded with appreciative chuckles when in deadly earnest. Irony has never been very popular in England, and never will be. He anticipated Shaw in upsetting people's preconceived opinions. He used a bludgeon to squash

political folly and insincerity; he annoyed politicians, but their heads were too hard to receive any serious hurt. On the whole, the government found him rather a nuisance, for he had a very clear and logical brain; and when they had been patting themselves on the back with regard to some ingenious scheme of party politics, or concerning the management of the South African War, he invariably annoyed them by pulling the scheme to pieces and proving its absurdity. He made people question things—things that had never been questioned before. He was a reformer; and reformers have never been popular —in England. Of course, they could not send him to prison for having ideas—even in England; but he was one of the few men who had foreseen the war with Germany, and he was always bothering the government about it, and it grew angry. He had studied the German spy system, and had discovered some amazing facts; but the police laughed at him, and the Foreign Office snubbed him.

Wynn had very little faith in anyone in the political world, and had searched in vain for a new star on the political horizon. Naturally, he was not popular with the dying Tories; his barbs were beginning to hurt. And he was equally unpopular with the young hopefuls of the Liberal party, for Wynn hated and distrusted Germany,

and the young Liberals were salaaming to everything German.

Wynn had a special reason for hating the Germans. His sister, to whom he was very devoted, was married to a German who illtreated her shamefully and flaunted his unfaithfulness in her face, while taking good care to keep well within the letter of the law. Wynn hated everything tricky and insincere—including lawyers; and he had a wholesome horror of their methods. He had threatened to thrash his brother-in-law unless that choice specimen of Teutonic *Kultur* mended his ways; but his brother-in-law was very popular in society and on the turf, had been cartooned in *Vanity Fair,* and was a member of several exclusive clubs.

There had been one or two scenes before witnesses; and when the Baron Frederic William Karl Augustus von Freidmann was found in his garden at Shooter's Hill, shot through the heart, with a revolver belonging to Wynn within a yard of him, and when the revolver was found to contain five unexploded cartridges and one that had been used, the circumstantial evidence against Wynn was almost overwhelming, and he was arrested that evening.

When brought before a magistrate the next morning and asked why he carried a revolver, Wynn stated that it was beacuse his life had been

threatened by German spies. The magistrate ridiculed his statement, and committed him for trial. When asked to explain how his revolver happened to be in the Baron's garden, Wynn replied that he had lost it the night before, that it had been taken out of his overcoat pocket while he was sitting in a well-known German beer-hall near Piccadilly Circus, watching certain men he suspected of being spies. He had been unable to prove an alibi; he had long been suspicious of his brother-in-law's friendly intentions. It had puzzled him at first that a man so fond of society and so popular with his friends should prefer to live in such an out-of-the-way spot as Shooter's Hill. One could see the river, Woolwich Arsenal, the Royal Artillery Barracks. If, in an enemy attack on London, Woolwich Arsenal were hit by a shell—

On the night in question, disguised and unrecognizable, he had followed the men from the Gambrinus; he had lost them at Cannon Street, but had picked up their trail at London Bridge, and had lost it again at Woolwich. He was arrested as a loiterer, his disguise discovered, his identity proved, two hours after his brother-in-law was found shot.

It would take a genius to extricate himself from such a net of circumstantial evidence.

The Baron's death caused general grief; there

were royal messages of condolence. The papers spoke of his qualities as a sportsman. And certain gentlemen in the Wilhelmstrasse chuckled to themselves at one more proof of the incurable stupidity of the English.

Wynn was tried for murder and sentenced to death. Suddenly, for no conceivable reason, a wave of sentimentality broke over his head. There were letters to the newspapers, public appeals to the Home Secretary, an extraordinary agitation. They had suddenly remembered that Wynn was a public character, and that nothing he did should be taken too seriously. Eventually the Home Office commuted his sentence to penal servitude for life, and the public conscience breathed again.

London missed his weekly article, but soon forgot him in the excitement of the postponed coronation.

In the spring of 1917 the police raided a suspected house occupied by a naturalized German who had expressed strong pro-British sentiments; it was a surprise raid, giving no time for papers to be destroyed. The house had been a center for German espionage. The man's wife had been active in Red Cross work, and his daughters intimate with girls of established social position not unconnected with politics. But in spite of this, papers were found proving that the Baron von

Friedmann had been a prominent official in the German secret service, that his murder had been arranged by certain men at the Wilhelmstrasse in order to get rid of Wynn, who had been finding out too much, and to punish von Friedmann, who had behaved indiscreetly in his cups.

The German Secret Service is rarely sentimental, and the Baron was given to boasting. He was shot in his own garden, and Wynn's revolver was stolen for the purpose. Witnesses had been paid to incriminate him, and everything arranged with craft and that peculiar conscientiousness so dear to the German mind. Germany had to get rid of Wynn, and of course succeeded in her scheme. But Wynn had foiled her by omitting to be hanged. He had lost fifteen years of his life, and he was returning to his wife and family to begin life all over again.

The situation was sufficiently ironical to appeal to his humor, and there was a grim twinkle in his eye when he addressed his son Arthur at Waterloo Station with the words: "I think you must be my son! You 're so like your mother."

CHAPTER V

First Sycophant: He is a young man of parts.
Reformer: Of parts that have no magnitude.
Pro Patria, Act 2.

IF it had been a trying day for Amelia, it had also been a trying day for Arthur. He had come down to breakfast at peace with all the world. After all, the world had always been particularly kind to him. Four years at a preparatory school in French Switzerland had been rather decent; he had acquired a knowledge of French and German that had been of inestimable value to him. In fact, he was a far better French scholar than the Foreign Secretary himself. He was a master of those little intimate phrases of French slang that labeled him a cosmopolitan. He was an adept at winter sports, and was a strict upholder of etiquette on the ice and good form on a *luge*. At Harrow he made up for his deficiencies in English grammar and mathematics by his amazing—for an English school-boy—knowledge of French. It was true that he never could remember how many r's there were in Mediterranean, or whether you spelt receive with an "ei" or an "ie"; and it was a physical impossibility for him

to construct a grammatical sentence. But in writing mandarin English he had no equal. After all, to write mandarin English and to make it mean anything at all is some feat. One sometimes wonders whether there is a special school maintained by government officials for teaching civil servants to avoid clearness of meaning.

He had lounged through Cambridge, reading when necessary, and had been carefully steered through his "exams" by a competent coach. He had belonged to a swank set; that is to say, a set of men who prided themselves on being themselves to the *n*th degree. They were good form —as the phrase is understood by the unimaginative youth of ample means and little intelligence; they took a patronizing interest in politics, and read studiously, but without much profit, a number of "precious" books and plays. Enthusiasm was tabu; each cultivated a blasé exterior and a self-assured, self-possessed, self-complacent manner. They reminded one of modern politicians grown younger in looks, but with the same intellectual swank.

From Cambridge to the Foreign Office was no sea-change; but the Foreign Office developed the ego, added to the knowledge of mandarin English, and developed the gospel of the permanent official: "We are *it:* the public exists for us, not us for the public." This slogan is engraved

in indelible ink over the portals of every government department, and one hears on excellent authority that the Ministry of Pensions, the latest convert, recently sent their office-boy across to the Treasury to borrow some indelible ink and a nice set of transfer letters that would fit the portals of Westminster House.

When war was declared, much to the astonishment of the Foreign Office, there was a general search for the atlas supplied to that department gratis; it was found in the desk of the junior office-boy, who was diligently searching through it in order to discover of what country the town of Ultimatum was the capital. It was a frightful shock to the Foreign Office when it realized how near Germany was to Europe, and special efforts were made on behalf of those Germans who, though resident in England, were anxious to fight against us and who desired sea passage to their own country. The Foreign Office sat up till unheard-of hours—some, it is understood, remained until ten minutes to six, sacrificing a round of golf —issuing passports to the German reservists.

Arthur, strolling across St. James's Park to his club after a hard day's work (he had been able to take only a hurried two hours for luncheon, and a bare hour for tea, and when you think that it was considered bad form to arrive at the F.O. later than 11 a.m. you can figure to yourself how

fatiguing the life must be!), pondered the situation. A girl in white, with a frightfully fascinating Ethel Levy curl, smiled at him; he stopped and raised his hat. "Allow me," she said, and presented him with a white feather. He placed it in his cigarette-case, lighted another cigarette, and resumed his walk. Near the German Embassy, where von Kuhlmann sat autographing photographs for his friends in the Cabinet and the editors of two morning, two evening, and one solemn provincial newspaper, he noticed a girl in blue giving a frightfully fascinating imitation of Gladys Cooper. She noticed him and smiled; he stopped and raised his hat. "Allow me," she said, and presented him with a white feather. "Thanks awfully: I 've already had mine! Do keep this for someone else," he urged. "Thanks," she replied, "I hope I sha'n't need it"; and she turned her back on him and made tracks in the direction of an actor-manager who happened to be celebrating his sixty-fourth birthday, but who was tremendously flattered at being considered of military age. Placing the white feather next to his heart, he returned to his house in the most exclusive part of Mayfair, and read some plays —that is to say, he made his secretary read them, as he had come to the conclusion that a khaki part might suit him very becomingly.

Arthur wandered up the steps of his club—

that dreadfully out-of-the-picture erection on the left-hand side of Pall Mall—and strolled into the smoking-room.

"Cheerio, old thing!" cried one of the friends of his youth. "How many have you got? I've collected eleven."

Arthur neither liked being called "old thing" nor being told to cheerio. But he was always courteous. He admired his friend's collection of white feathers, and produced his own.

A very languid young man with a Cyril Maude drawl lay stretched on a leather Chesterfield. He was (unpaid) secretary to an under-secretary, and the idea of war was abhorrent to him. It meant such a lot of work.

"I say, you fellows," he drawled, "there's a perfectly topping girl handin' out white feathers at the corner by the Ritz. You all ought to go and get one. I got five before she tumbled to it," he added, chuckling.

"The question before the house," said a tall white-faced youth with 1820 whiskers, who was sipping absinthe and smoking Russian cigarettes on which his monogram was engraved—"the question before the house is: do we—er—offer ourselves or do we do our duty in that state of life to which it has pleased a grateful government to call us?"

The motion was still being talked out when Arthur's car was announced.

He returned to Chalfont.

Two and a half years later he was still returning to Chalfont; his chief considered him indispensable.

On this particular Saturday morning he had come down to breakfast, as previously stated, at peace with all the world. His clothes were the last word in good form, his boots were made for him by an artist; he was engaged to a charming girl; he had no worries. His knowledge of French had served him in good stead; his chief absolutely refused to part with him. Then entered Nemesis in the guise of Parsons, the ideal parlor-maid, with a message to the effect that his mother wished to speak to him.

He finished his breakfast, glanced at the *Times,* lighted a cigarette ("fifteen bob a hundred; but hardships were impossible to avoid in war-time"), and, going upstairs, knocked at his mother's door.

An hour later he descended the stairs, entered his waiting car, and dashed off to the station.

"What 's the row?" Olive had called to him, having noticed his abnormal solemnity.

"Mother will tell you," he had replied.

It was a bit of a facer. His mother had never spoken of his father, and he had never bothered

to press the subject. He had imagined his father to have been one of those amiable nonentities that masquerade as the head of a household, die suddenly, and leave a properly drawn-up will showing excellent investments in gilt-edged securities for the eldest son eventually to inherit. But to discover that his father was alive, that he was returning to join the family party, that he would have to be considered and referred to, that he might be—well, how could a fellow know what he would be like?

Arthur broke out into a cold perspiration.

His father had spent fifteen years in prison. What did a convict do? He broke stones. Breaking stones must make the hands rough and horny—like a laborer's. He would be obliged to sit at the same table with his father; he would watch those hands—fascinated by the horror of them. His father might be old-fashioned, with a contempt for the art of the manicurist; he might have lost his manners and have acquired horrid habits—like those frightful bounders that had begun to crowd the first-class carriages on the Great Central: war profiteers, contractors, munition manufacturers, commercial travelers. He might, on the other hand, be like a man crushed, a meek and watery-eyed person who was afraid of giving trouble and, because of that, gave double; a man who started at the hoot of a motor

horn and cringed at the sound of a carriage whip. Or he might be a man who liked to talk of how things were done at Portland; he might be familiar or, worse still, sentimental; he might be the kind of man who pawed a fellow about.

Of course, it was rough on him—deuced rough. After all, fifteen years out of a man's life was going some.

Arthur had studied American slang at the Hippodrome, and, like the officers of the Royal Flying Corps, had adapted some of the most picturesque phrases to his own use and incorporated them in his small but select vocabulary.

There is a snobbish feature about English slang that detracts from its picturesqueness and obscures its original meaning. When the army first borrowed and then commandeered slang acquired from American music-hall artists, it did so with enthusiasm, but got it all wrong. American slang is far more subtle than it sounds.

"Good Lord!" thought Arthur suddenly. "I sha'n't know him when I see him!"

One might almost pity him, driving across London in a taxicab, growing more and more perturbed as the hour of reunion drew nearer. Had Arthur possessed a practical mind, he might have discovered that there is a tube railway from Baker Street to Waterloo, that it is more economical than a taxicab, and does the journey in half

the time; but Arthur was a civil servant, and therefore unpractical by training. And, anyhow, why *should* a fellow ride in those beastly tubes? Taxis were infinitely pleasanter.

Waterloo was in its customary state of turmoil. There was a hospital train in, and the cot cases were being distributed among the waiting ambulances. Arthur watched the dexterity and precision with which this was done. He saw a man he knew—an officer, with his arm strapped to his side—being helped into a waiting motor-car that was chauffeured by a girl in uniform. The officer waved to him cheerily. "Poor devil!" he called out. "Have they made you an indispensable? What rotten luck!" And he was driven off, smoking a cigarette and whistling a song from a popular revue. He would see that revue in a few days —at a matinée! Good Lord! What luck to be in Blighty—in that jolly little hospital for officers in Queen Anne Street where he knew all the sisters and the nurses, and the matron was a ripper, and the medical officer such a sympathetic cove. And old George with his comic face would open the door and ask him if he 'd mind walking upstairs because the lift was full of tea-trays. And he could ring up a girl who—yes, it was good to be back in London. But he wondered how his platoon was getting on. That chap Punce needed a bit of encouragement. And Jarvis—Jarvis was

all right, but he used to have fits of shivering. And—oh, well! he would be back again in a couple of months; and, anyway, he was going to have a good time now he was here. He hoped he would be in Sister Argyll's ward.

Arthur almost felt envious—for a moment; but a cup of China tea and a muffin in the tea-room steadied his nerves. The train from Weymouth was almost due. He paid his bill, rose, and descended the stairs. The train was scheduled for No. 5 platform. He bought a platform ticket, ensconced himself behind a waiting luggage-truck, and, lighting a cigarette, gave his mind up to pondering.

The train came in, the engine giving its customary spurt as it made its way alongside the platform. A mass of humanity was disgorged from its interior. Arthur stared hard, became dizzy from staring, made one or two blunders, and suffered intensely during the space of three minutes.

The man who disturbed him from his meditations had a curiously vivid personality. His iron-gray hair was cut very short, and his clothes had obviously been made at least fifteen years ago, and were too large for the wearer. They seemed to cover the ghost of a man's youth as well as what remained of the man himself. He was very self-contained and had a rare but illuminating

smile; his manner was quiet, but slightly ironical; his eyes were sympathetic, but you could tell that he wasted no time in self-pity. He was a little dazed, and conveyed the impression of a man recently awakened from a long dream.

"I think you must be my son! You 're so absurdly like your mother," said the stranger, with one of his illuminating smiles.

Arthur heaved a sigh of relief. After all, though out of date as far as clothes were concerned, this chap was quite presentable, and his voice was everything that a voice should be—but so rarely is in London.

"Very glad to see you," said Arthur. "Your train 's a bit late. Have you any luggage?"

John Osborne Wynn smiled. Arthur looked uncomfortable. What an ass he was making of himself, he thought. What made him ask such a footling question? But it was rather decent of his father not to mind. His father! Good Lord! How absurd it seemed!

"No; I did n't bring any luggage. I thought I 'd buy some new clothes," said Wynn, his eyes twinkling. "Perhaps you would be kind enough to recommend a tailor?"

"Rather!" said Arthur. A tailor seemed distinctly necessary; his father's clothes were a thousand years out of date—or fifteen years: the same thing.

"We 'd better find a taxi," said Arthur.

"I 'm in your hands," said his father. "But—would you mind telling me: what *is* a taxi?"

"Good Lord!" said Arthur, and explained.

It appeared that Wynn had never seen a taxi, or a motor-omnibus. When he retired from the world the motor industry was in its infancy. If a motor-omnibus was a novelty, what would an airplane be? or a Zeppelin?

"He did n't say much; he just stared into the distance," Arthur told Olive, later on.

"Into the past, perhaps," said Olive gently.

As they were crossing Westminster Bridge, Arthur realized that his father was staring at *him*. Bad form, no doubt; but somehow it failed to make him uncomfortable, it was so impersonal. All the same, it would be just as well to avoid recognition by anyone he knew. Arthur leaned back in the cab.

Wynn chuckled. "I 'm not a very presentable parent, am I?" he said.

St. James's Park, with its lake drained dry and its quaintly utilitarian government offices, the bomb protections on Westminster Abbey, and the crowds of khaki-clad pedestrians seemed to fascinate Wynn. He just sat and stared, occasionally smiling to himself. His son was not particularly communicative. Ah, well! Boys, like dogs, must be left to make the first advances. Probably

Arthur would say something presently, something that would act as the latch-key to open the door that at the moment appeared to stand between them.

As they flew round the corner into Manchester Square, Arthur looked at his watch. "We shall catch the five-five if we 're lucky," he said. "Will you have a cigarette?"

But the cigarette tasted rather grassy to Wynn; it was the first he had smoked for fifteen years, and his palate was not prepared for the privilege. Would his home-coming be anything like his first cigarette? A dream of delight in anticipation—a little disappointing in reality?

He shivered a little.

"Would you like the window up?" inquired Arthur politely.

Wynn shook his head. Then his eye caught the exquisite crease in his son's trousers, and his sense of humor came back with a rush.

"We have n't given ourselves away, have we?" he chuckled.

CHAPTER VI

Pessimist (shivering): The city is in ashes, the people all fled!
Hostess: Never mind! You are just in time for tea!
Pro Patria, Act 4.

"It 's a bit trying for mother," said Olive, after Amelia had gone to her room to take an aspirin tablet and lie down for a few minutes.

"It 's a bit tryin' for us all," muttered Jimmy, very depressed.

Olive looked at him. Boys were so selfish! They looked at everything merely from their own point of view.

They wandered down the drive to meet the expected car. "Great snakes! There *is* the car!" cried Jimmy; "and Arthur's alone!"

"Could he have missed him?" said Olive, with that disdain for grammatical pedantry so characteristic of the educated classes.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Jimmy. "It 's just like Arthur to go and make a mess of everything. I wish the mater had sent *me.*"

The car came sprinting up the hill and pulled up at the gates.

"Take her up to the garage, Stevenson," said

Arthur to the chauffeur. "I sha'n't want her again."

Stevenson touched his hat and obeyed orders. He just missed a clump of rhododendrons on the curve, avoided a kitchen-maid by a dexterous bit of steering, and brought the car to a standstill before the garage. The distance from the gates to the garage was two hundred and twenty yards: Stevenson had accomplished it in ten seconds.

Arthur's face was like a closed book.

"Well?" inquired Olive, quivering with excitement.

"Spit it out, Arthur," drawled Jimmy. "Where *is* he?"

"For heaven's sake, give me a chance to breathe! I'm absolutely fagged out," said Arthur, lighting a cigarette with amazing coolness.

"Have you lost him?" asked Olive.

Arthur blew out the match, deposited it behind some bushes, and started to walk toward the house. "Don't be ridiculous," he said. "He's walking up the hill; he said he thought I 'd better come on and prepare you all." He blew smoke, through his nose and felt for his holder. "I 've had the devil's own time," he said.

"Tell us all about it," insisted Olive.

"How did you recognize him?" asked Jimmy.

Arthur flushed. "Hang it all! I looked for

an elderly man with cropped hair, but there were quite a number of them. I made one mistake: I went up to an old blighter who looked a bit lost, and said: 'Excuse me! Aren't you my father?' But he got quite shirty and threatened to give me in charge."

"I expect he took you for one of the boys," said Jimmy. "Probably thought you said *'How's* your father?' And that you were Harry Tate or George Robey or one of those brainy fellows trying to pull his leg."

"How did you find him eventually?" inquired Olive.

"I did n't," replied Arthur; "he found me. Came up to me and said: 'I think you must be my son, you 're so absurdly like your mother!' . . . *Am* I like mother?" he inquired, frowning.

"No," said Olive; "but you 're probably like what *she* was like at your age."

"What did you do? Have a drink?" inquired Jimmy. "I think you might have stood him a small bottle—under the circumstances."

"Look here, you two," said Arthur, as the trio drew up at the front steps. "What are we going to tell people? What are we going to do about our name?"

Olive had a faculty for keeping her head in an emergency.

"We 'd better not do anything until we hear what *they* propose to do," she asserted.

"Yes," agreed Arthur; "but I must tell Chloe *something.*"

"I wonder what people will say," mused Olive.

"Unless we 're jolly careful what *we* say, and unless we all say the same thing, it 's bound to cause talk," said Arthur.

Jimmy pondered. "A man who has n't been a father for fifteen years can't be expected to know how a father is supposed to behave," he said. "Suppose he does n't realize we can't stand being bossed nowadays?"

"You 're only thinking of yourselves. Boys are so self-centered," cried Olive.

"Girls are merely self-conscious," replied the imperturbable Jimmy.

Arthur had one of those flashes of insight so rare in a civil servant.

"It must be a bit embarrassing for *him,*" he suggested.

All three went thoughtfully into the hall, meeting their mother descending the stairs.

"Arthur," she cried, "Where is he? Has n't he come? Did you miss him? Oh, Arthur!"

A look of pained exasperation swept over Arthur's face. "Don't worry, mother," he urged in his most soothing tones. "He 'll be here in a minute. He said he would rather walk."

"Why did you let him?" complained Amelia.

Arthur smiled. "He didn't look the kind of father who would take contradiction kindly," he said.

Amelia shivered. Of course the young people could not be expected to understand what she was suffering. Young people were so hard, so rigid in their ethics, so—so unimaginative. Sentimentality was so abhorrent to them; even sentiment had to be disguised in slang. Where an early-Victorian lover would press his hand to his heart, kneel at his lady's feet, and whisper, "At last, my love, at last!" the 1917 hero of romance would stroll into the room with his hands in his pockets and, lighting a cigarette, exclaim: "Hallo, old thing! Cheerio!"

The Victorian era was an era of exaggeration and insincerity, and it produced a great deal of bad art and some appalling hypocrisies. The simplicity of 1917 was looked upon with suspicion by the survivors of Victorianism. It was the most English thing that had ever happened to England. Those responsible for the Victorian era had endeavored to Germanize England; German music, German beer, German methods, German culture, German pomposity were press-agented to an alarming extent for the benefit of a people sunk (with a few exceptions) in the slough of commercial prosperity. Amelia had been

brought up among people who considered Handel the last word in music and Landseer the supreme painter; she had been inoculated with an aggressive sentimentality, and it had taken her a good many years to throw off the poison. Even now she occasionally had a relapse.

She shivered. "I can't help feeling nervous," she exclaimed. "What will he think of us, I wonder?"

Arthur, fearing a scene and scenting a nerve-storm preached on the text of "You don't understand!" strolled out of the hall and down the drive.

"It all seems so unreal!" cried Amelia.

Olive and Jimmy, with a furtive glance at each other, a kind of challenge, each daring the other to desert, threatening terrible consequences did he or she try it on, followed their mother into the living-room. Amelia opened an album of photographs that reposed in a drawer in her desk. "That was taken three months before he—" She pointed to a picture. "You would n't recognize me now—from that? Would you?" she asked.

Olive looked critically at the photograph. "I don't know, mother," she said; "I don't think you've changed so much."

"You *know* I have; you must know it," protested Amelia.

"Dash it all!" said Jimmy; "he 'll have changed, too."

Amelia put the album back into the drawer. There was a sudden silence in the room as footsteps were heard crossing the hall. Then the door opened, and John Osborne Wynn came into the room.

Amelia gasped. "John!" she cried; "I did n't hear you come."

They kissed.

Olive and Jimmy wriggled with embarrassment. How would their parents behave? Would they play the game as the game was understood by the youth of the twentieth century, or would they weep and make a scene? They looked at each other in relief. Their father was almost miraculously detached and calm; his calmness was soothing their mother. Evidently he was intending to take the situation in a sporting spirit.

Amelia shivered. Would he think she had altered much? Of course she had altered. Fifteen years—and *such* years. Her hair had scarcely any gray in it, and her figure—he *must* notice that her figure was that of a girl. Would he think she had lost her looks? "But you have n't seen Olive—and James!" she exclaimed.

"Olive," repeated John, looking round and approving. He approached her and kissed her cheek. "You were only a baby," he said. "I

did n't realize how much you would have grown. But James," he added, turning to his younger son with a slightly puzzled look; "I don't remember James."

"He was born three months after —" said Amelia.

John looked at his younger son, smiled, and offered his hand. James heaved a sigh of relief. How frightful it would have been if his father had wanted to kiss him!

"How do you do, my boy?" said John.

"How d' you do!" replied James; then added with a gulp: "Father."

"Arthur should n't have left you to walk up alone," said Amelia.

"I asked him to leave me," replied John. "He 's a nice boy, Amelia; but he makes me feel very old—and very young."

"Oh, John!" cried Amelia; "I can scarcely realize—"

"Neither can I, my dear," said John, smiling.

"The tragedy of it!" continued Amelia. "Fifteen years taken from our lives—"

John looked at her. "You lost a husband—a lover; you find—a comparative stranger," he said. "That is what has run through my head, night after night, for fifteen years. 'If we meet again, we should meet almost as strangers.'

I 'm just a little in a dream," he added, walking to the window and gazing at the rose-garden.

"So am I, John," said Amelia; "I was just saying so."

"The door was so closely shut from the outside world. Now I am back in it, and everything appears to be going on as usual. It has been a nightmare with me—that you might be in want. But this house spells comfort—"

John broke off suddenly, and grasped the significance of the furniture and appointments of the room. He looked at Amelia questioningly. The size of the house, the atmosphere of it, the (what would be described by house agents as) park-like grounds—all pointed to an assured income. He seemed puzzled.

"Providence has been very helpful, John," explained Amelia. "Uncle Richard was killed in a motor accident."

John smiled. Uncle Richard's opinion of providence might have been less flattering.

"He left us a comfortable income and this house," continued Amelia. "Arthur was able to go to Harrow and to Cambridge, and then into the Foreign Office. That 's why he is n't fighting. His chief said he was indispensable."

"He soon made himself indispensable," said John.

"Olive was at school in Paris when the war

broke out. She did n't get away for nearly three weeks; then Arthur got perimssion to go over and fetch her. She did n't want to come," explained Amelia.

"Of course I did n't," said Olive. "Paris was much more interesting than London. We expected a siege."

"Now she is a V.A.D. at such a delightful hospital for officers," continued Amelia. "She has passed all her Red Cross examinations, but she has only to carry in the trays. She 's on leave for a week; the matron thought she was looking a little run down. James is at Harrow. He wants to join the R.F.C. He has already flown a bumpety, or bumped a fly, or whatever the technical term is, and says he could stunt a 'bus with any of them; but, thank heaven! he 's too young."

John looked puzzled. What language was his wife speaking? "It 's all Greek to me," he admitted. "But perhaps someone will interpret later on. But the name," he said. "Did n't people guess?"

Here was the first fence Amelia had dreaded. John had always been an impossible man to deceive—even in little things.

"Uncle Richard insisted on our dropping the Wynn and calling ourselves Osborne. I thought you would n't mind," she added hastily, noticing

his raised eyebrows, "under the circumstances. It seemed like the hand of providence," she concluded piously.

The hand of providence, when it points in the required direction, is a priceless asset to a woman.

"I presume providence did n't bank on my return?" suggested John drily. "It 's fortunate I had no luggage."

Amelia looked at him appealingly. "I hope you 'll respect Uncle Richard's wishes, John," she pleaded. "I have had no time to make plans. I only told the children your story today," she added hastily.

"It almost seems a pity—my coming back," said John. "A needless embarrassment."

"John! That 's unkind," protested Amelia. "You must make allowances for us. The suddenness? The shock! . . . Would n't you like some tea?" she inquired, suddenly changing to practicalities.

John chuckled. "No, my dear, thank you!" he replied.

"I suppose it 's the twentieth century," said Amelia. "One does n't have emotional moments nowadays; one tries to be normal, though the heavens fall."

"I appreciate that," replied John gently.

Someone—an American, I think—killed sentiment with a phrase just at the end of the last

century. He spoke of a play as possessing great heart interest. The phrase tickled the public; heart-interest obviously meant sentiment, so sentiment since then has become a theme for laughter. Perhaps the man who first used that phrase failed to realize that he had killed a rather beautiful and tender thing. Sentimentality continued to flourish in cheap fiction and in music-hall songs and drawing-room ballads, when laid on with a trowel; but sentiment, that illusive and rare quality which provided the pass-key to dreams that came true, from that moment had a hard row to hoe, and has become as rare a thing as self-sacrifice without advertisement.

"Do you remember clinging to me—and crying as though your heart would break—when I was taken away?" said John. "I have n't seen you since. You were wise not to come to my trial."

"I could n't, John," replied Amelia, a tinge of reproach in her voice. "James was born the day you—"

The habit of leaving her sentences unfinished was sometimes very effective; but it was an entirely unconscious search after style on her part.

"For your sake I was glad when they sentenced me," continued John; "and, for your sake, I was sorry when they changed it to penal servitude for life. It was n't fair to you."

"I have tried to do my duty to our children,"

said Amelia. It was her favorite excuse, her customary challenge to criticism.

"I 'm sure you have succeeded," replied John chivalrously.

"I hope so," said Amelia with emotion. "For that I have sacrificed everything."

Olive and Jimmy grew hot with embarrassment. It was an old song to them. It was the overture or the finale or occasionally the coda to every scene they had been through. Few families steer clear of those familiar, oft-recurring scenes of reproachful reminiscences, beginning with an unguarded word and ending with a kiss of reconciliation on the part of the parent involved and a sigh of relief and a sincere "Thank the Lord" on the part of the children.

John, being a man, showed a certain lack of tact. "I don't quite follow you," he said. "Have you had to sacrifice much, my dear?"

"I have sacrificed my own feelings, my own wishes," replied Amelia, with a faint echo of Victorian self-deception. "Had I had only myself to think of, I should have lived a quiet, secluded life, seeing no one, knowing no one; but, for our children's sake, I had to hide my feelings and become sociable."

"I think it 's a great pity mother did n't tell us the truth; we could have helped her," said Olive.

"Yes; and it would n't have come as such an eye-opener," said Jimmy.

This shifting of allegiance was too much for Amelia. "I did it for your sake," she protested tearfully.

John took up the cudgels on her behalf. "I understand, my dear," he said, quietly and soothingly. "You postponed the disclosure, and continued to postpone it—until it became impossible to make. It 's our national habit of procrastination, and our gift for believing that something will occur to enable us to muddle through a thing without disaster in spite of our refusal to face facts. It 's very English, and very natural, and intensely perplexing to our foreign friends. And I don't know that it has n't even disconcerted the Germans. We must be an exasperating problem to the logical mind. Tell me, dear," he added a little anxiously; "did you believe me guilty?"

"No, John! Never!" said Amelia.

"I 'm glad," said John.

"I knew that, even if you had wanted to kill Frederick, you could n't have done so by shooting him," continued Amelia. "You were such an abnormally bad shot."

John chuckled grimly. "If the learned judge had had your logical mind, my dear, I should have had a fairer trial," he said.

His thoughts flew back to the court where he had been tried and sentenced. He could hear the learned judge's clean-clipped words and cultivated intonation as he summed up—against the prisoner, was the general opinion. The judge had made the jury realize that the prisoner was a monomaniac, that he had used his fear of Germany as a cloak for carrying out his schemes of personal revenge; that, instead of leaving the law to deal with what he considered were his sister's wrongs, he had arrogantly taken the matter into his own hands, and then, frightened by what he had done, had tried to evade responsibility by inventing a ridiculous string of absurdities in connection with the foreign policy of a friendly power.

There had been applause in court from a number of interested spectators of Teutonic aspect, but it had been immediately suppressed by the judge with a threat to clear the court. The learned judge had enjoyed the applause, but he had enjoyed still more threatening to clear the court. Threatening to clear the court, and jokes of a peculiarly humble order of wit, were the specialties of Mr. Justice Winton. He it was who, when asked whether he had ever contributed to *Punch,* replied that, though he had never been so useful to *Punch, Punch* had on many occasions

been useful to him. *Punch* was flattered, but a little nervous.

"I have lived under the terror of our children discovering the truth and reproaching me," said Amelia; "of our friends discovering it and ostracizing us. It has been like a long nightmare; and now—"

"Now we have to begin all over again," mused John. "It is very difficult to realize that these are my children," he added, smiling; "and I 'm quite sure it 's equally difficult for them to realize that I am their father." He looked at Olive and then at Jimmy.

"Is n't it?" he asked.

Olive contemplated the question, and answered it calmly.

"When English people don't understand a thing, they think it either funny or shocking. You realize that if you go to the theater," she continued reminiscently. "Having you suddenly introduced to me as my father shocked me just a little—at first; then it amused me. Then I suddenly realized what it must have meant to you—and to mother; and I nearly cried." She hesitated a moment. "One does n't cry much, you know, nowadays," she explained. "I suppose it was different—when mother was a girl?"

Amelia looked at her daughter. She thought the question was slightly in bad taste.

"We were taught to look upon tears as a feminine virtue," said John.

"*We* gave up crying and took to saying 'Damn!'" said Olive calmly. "It means about the same thing, and it 's much more soothing. I don't know how Jimmy feels about it," she added, turning to the young Harrovian, who was busily occupied sketching model airplanes on the fly-leaf of a volume of Mr. Ezra Pound's "Lustra"; "but I 'm very glad you 've come back, father—for our sake as well as for mother's."

"Thank you, my dear," said John, a little touched. "And how does Jimmy feel about it?" he inquired, turning to his younger son.

Jimmy was embarrassed but amazingly direct. "if you 're decent to us, sir, we 'll be decent to you," he replied. "I think that covers the whole situation," he added, replacing "Lustra" on a small table that it shared with a bowl of roses and a leather-bound volume of *"Cranford."* Amelia's taste in literature was catholic.

"I think it does," agreed John. "Thank you, Jimmy; I 'll do my best to be decent to you."

"Mother," said Olive nervously, "I think there 's one thing father ought to be told."

Amelia looked up questioningly.

"About Seppy, you know," said Olive.

CHAPTER VII

Hostess: You are envious of our luxury.
Reformer: No; only of your self-complacence.
Pro Patria, Act I.

"I CONGRATULATE you, Amelia," said John a little later on, after Olive and Jimmy, having manufactured obvious excuses to absent themselves,—Olive because she realized that her father and mother would have much to say to each other, and Jimmy because the situation was becoming a little too intimately embarrassing,—had left them alone. "They are charming young people—a great improvement on *our* generation of children." Then a slightly puzzled look came over his face. "But who—or what in the world is Seppy?" he inquired. "Not, I trust, a toy Yorkshire? They were very much in fashion when I retired."

Amelia became tearful. "Oh, John!" she exclaimed. "It sounds so dreadful."

"I love dogs," said John; "but I prefer them big and slapable."

"He—he is n't a dog," said Amelia.

"Oh!" murmured John; "I see. What is he? A tame cat?"

A creative artist can make an admirable husband and father; but he is, as a rule, so alarmingly quick in the uptake that it becomes a trifle embarrassing.

"No, John," replied Amelia self-consciously. "He is a colonel. At the War Office. A friend —a very great friend—who has been kind to me and to the children."

"And what is it about him that our children think I ought to know?" inquired John, with a smile.

Amelia hesitated. "He—he comes here a good deal," she said.

The twinkle in John's eyes had always been exasperating to Amelia when she wanted to explain things in her own way. "He knows all about rates and taxes, and how to bud roses, and—" She hesitated again.

"I understand," said John; "he can make himself generally useful?"

"One is so lost without a man's advice—in *some things,*" said Amelia.

John chuckled and rubbed his chin reflectively. "Does he know about *me?*" he inquired.

"He thinks I 'm a widow," said Amelia, playing with her handkerchief.

John had a curious little mannerism that he

usually indulged in when not quite sure of his subject. He may have caught it from Sir John Hare—an actor he greatly admired—or it may have been instinctive. It was to rub himself two or three times very quickly behind the right ear with the back of the second finger of his right hand. Amelia remembered the gesture; it seemed to bring the past more intimately into perspective. "Does he—hope?" asked John.

"I have refused him seventeen times," replied Amelia. "I said that nothing could make me forget *you*."

"That was a terrible challenge to a man's vanity," said John.

"Of course I told him how much I appreciated his loyalty and devotion," continued Amelia.

"In the event of the strenuous life at Portland proving too much for my constitution, would his loyalty and devotion have been rewarded?"

"Will you be hurt if I speak quite frankly?" said Amelia very simply.

"My dear, I shall be hurt if you don't," replied John.

Amelia had not reached her thirtieth birthday when John had been taken from her, their companionship broken up, their lives apparently ruined. She had enjoyed a peculiarly happy married life until then. Everything had gone well with them, the horizon had shown no dark

clouds. The only thing that had troubled Amelia at all, and that was in itself a very minor trouble, was the fact that John had invariably held views and opinions contrary to those of her friends and of her upbringing. When the crash came, she was dazed; she moved about in a dream. Jimmy was born just after the trial. Amelia had at first hoped that she would not recover, then she had realized that she must—for the children's sake. She knew she would never see John again, and after a while she realized that it was better so. She tried to think of herself as a widow, as one who, having been shown paradise for a moment, now had the vision sharply withdrawn. For the children's sake she knew she must not brood too much, that she must try to look forward without fear. Her heart was buried under the stone gateway at Portland; but she was still a woman, with youth to help her, and people had thought her pretty and attractive. She had always had an unconscious ability to attract men. She liked men; she liked them as friends, she bore with them as suitors; a moderately platonic flirtation was her natural medium for expressing herself. There was no harm in it; and if men took her kindness and responsiveness too seriously, they were to blame, not she. Admiration kept a woman young, and she hated the idea of growing old. It was difficult for a woman to

be obliged to bring up and educate two boys and a girl without a man to advise and to help her. She was not the kind of woman who could stand alone. She had always been used to leaning on John. His shoulder had always been there, waiting to be leaned on. She had found it impossible to make friends with women; women were afflicted with curiosity, they gossiped; they were uncertain, revengeful when snubbed; they would sacrifice truth and honor for a mouthful of gossip. She did n't trust women, she could n't. Besides, women bored her. If she could not have her husband, then she wanted to have a man dropping in regularly, someone she could consult about things she herself did not understand.

"You don't misunderstand me, John?" she cried a little piteously, after explaining her point of view to her husband.

"No, my dear," replied John quietly. "And did Seppy fill the bill?" he inquired, a smile twitching at the corner of his mouth.

Seppy had been very useful, she explained. He had been the first man who had been able to make clear to her the inner meaning of official phraseology. Rates and taxes were terrifying things to a woman, and she had hated to bother her lawyers too often. She had always possessed that peculiar kind of economical mind that would rather pay ten pounds to someone who was not

entitled to it than a guinea to a solicitor to save her from being mulcted of nearly nine times the amount. Income tax returns were enough to puzzle even the logical brain of a man. She had grown quite fond of Seppy; he had become to her a kind of animated inquire-within-upon-everything. She did n't love him; she could never love anyone again. "It 's just as well, John, is n't it?" she added, smiling—"now that you have come home."

"It has saved some unnecessary complications," said John.

"He is very keen on the question of making divorce easier for women," continued Amelia. John smiled; he had known one or two Seppies with that idea. "He is quite sincere; he sits on royal commissions and things," said Amelia.

John chuckled softly. Most of the Seppies he had known had usually been sat upon by the husbands of the women who wanted divorce to be made easier.

"He thinks that if a husband—or a wife—is sent to prison for life, or even for a longer period than seven years, a divorce should be automatic, for the sake of the children," explained Amelia.

"And for the sake of the birth-rate? I know," agreed John. "I had those ideas myself—before the question touched me personally. Now," he

added rather grimly, "now I see the other side of it."

"Ours is an unusual case," said Amelia quietly.

"Suppose you had been able to divorce me—automatically—and that you had married again," inquired John, "what would have happened?"

"I don't know, John," replied Amelia.

"What do our children think of the situation?" he asked.

"They did n't know you were alive, so they accepted Seppy as a friend of the house," she replied.

Modern children probably accepted a great many things, thought John. Possibly they had a keener sense of humor than the children of his generation, or else they took things more for granted. Perhaps it had become a philosophical age, or an age where people did n't bother as they used to about unnecessary or inevitable trifles.

"They were very firm with him," said Amelia, "when they noticed he was getting at all sentimental."

John's smile was a little grim. "I shall be very firm with him—if I notice anything of the kind," he remarked.

Amelia looked rather perplexed. "I hope you will be nice to him, John," she protested. "He has been very kind to *me.*"

"My dear," said her husband, "as far as I am

concerned, there shall always be a saucer of milk in the corner when he wants it."

"John! You don't think me heartless," pleaded Amelia a little breathlessly.

"My dear! I am not a believer in miracles," he answered gently.

"We can't expect to take up the old life just exactly where we left it off—fifteen years ago," said Amelia nervously. "Can we?"

"No," said John thoughtfully. "At the moment I feel rather like a privileged visitor." He was absorbing the details of the room, and unconsciously contrasting the atmosphere with that of his vacated cell at Portland.

"That hurts a little," said Amelia, knowing it was true.

John had suddenly grasped the significance of his home-coming. How could he expect things to be just as they had been? He was a stranger—almost. He had lived solitary and on his dearest memories; it was all the life-nourishment he had had to support his hopes and beliefs. Amelia had not been sentenced to a limited horizon; life with her had gone on very much as before. *She* had not been stripped bare of everything that made life worth while. And now, by a miracle, he had come back to her. But had he come back to her? or was he merely what he had described himself as—in an unguarded moment—a privileged visi-

tor? What right had he to expect anything else? Loneliness of soul inspires constancy; a diversity of interests aids forgetfulness.

His life had been cut short suddenly at the age of thirty-five; now, at fifty, he was taking it up again at the breaking-off point. For fifteen years he had been as a man dead; he had not really been alive at all, merely a man sleep-walking. During those fifteen years Amelia had lived in the world, of the world, for the world's verdict. It was utterly impossible for a woman under such conditions to concentrate entirely on the tragedy of her life. She had had other interests; she had had duties, responsibilities. She had not been compelled to endure mental stagnation. He must face facts; he must have patience. He could not expect passionate love, the welcome of a bride. He must be content with affection; and even affection had to be won. He must begin all over again. He must not expect anything as a right; he would not be content with the kind of affection that is given unconsciously to household companions. He would be a visitor—a privileged visitor—until all doors were thrown open to him, all mental reservations printed in letters he could read.

He condensed these musings into a few simple words—it was necessary to put Amelia at her ease. "Thank you, John," she said in a low voice; "you were always chivalrous."

"I have lived so much in myself, I have had so little to distract my thoughts, that the fifteen years have made no real hiatus in my life with you," he continued. "I could n't expect—I *should n't* expect you to have the same feeling. You have, very bravely, very rightly, taken hold of life again, and have had many interests; I have had none—outside of you and the children. And now that I come bursting in like a bomb-shell, it 's naturally a little difficult for you. When one is much alone, one dreams of everything coming right; and if a dream by chance comes true it seems as though it were in the natural order of things. You, on the other hand, have switched off to another line, and it 's a long way back to the junction. I have been side-tracked; you have proceeded on your journey. If you can't get back, if the line is too crowded with other interests, other memories, it is not your fault. I have learned to be patient, and to realize the deliciously ironical humor of the magician we call fate, the controller of destinies," he concluded a trifle grimly.

Amelia looked at him a little perturbed. "I hope, John, that does n't mean you have given up going to church?" she exclaimed. "I don't think providence would like being laughed at."

Providence, according to Amelia's mid-Victorian creed, spent most of its time listening behind

the door, with a big stick in its hand, ready to pounce out and destroy anyone of a rebellious frame of mind. John had never been orthodox.

Amelia moved to the window; she felt she would like to retire to bed, with some tea and toast and ten grains of aspirin, and to hide herself from the ironical exhibition that fate, or providence, was providing for her entertainment. Tomorrow she would be ready to face life under these new and, at present, strange conditions.

She felt that her self-control was giving way. Probably she was a coward; but life had been very difficult for her, and she suddenly realized an intense desire to let go temporarily.

"I wonder if you have such a thing in the house as a bottle of French vermouth," said John suddenly. "I have n't had a drink for fifteen years."

Amelia's hospitable instincts were promptly aroused. She was about to ring the bell; then she hesitated and looked at her husband with some perplexity.

"John!" she exclaimed. "What are we to tell the servants?"

John smiled. It was another of life's little ironies that he had forgotten. "Need we tell them anything?" he asked.

Amelia looked at him reproachfully. "I can't possibly go to cook and say: 'My husband has returned unexpectedly!' She thinks I am a

widow. I can't possibly say to her: 'I am not Mrs. Osborne; I am Mrs. Wynn.' She would give notice on the spot. Servants are so suspicious and always imagine the worst," she concluded fretfully.

John pondered. "Is there still a servant problem?" he inquired.

"There always *has* been one; there always *will* be one," said Amelia.

The average woman, looking back on her domestic life, sees a long vista of incompetent, impertinent, stupid, greedy, careless obstinate, prejudiced, here-to-day-and-gone-to-morrow females whose virtues were magnified by contrast with the others and whose shortcomings had become a subject for conversation with other unfortunate householders. It is largely the result of the English passion for unskilled labor and partly owing to the fact that the demand exceeds the supply. The average servant is a snob and a sycophant; but she is also a human being, and would perhaps appreciate more routine and less muddle provided she could have a few hours a day for rest and recreation. There is more neurasthenia due to the servant problem than the average doctor suspects.

"There were no discordant notes of domesticity at Portland," said John. "We did our own work, we lived the simple life, and I am bound to admit

that very few of us suffered from nervous breakdowns."

"All the best servants are getting positions in hospitals or munition works," said Amelia. "They are dreadfully difficult to keep."

"I 'm afraid I shall be difficult to disguise—if the newspapers get hold of my story," said John.

Amelia explained that the newspapers were too busily engaged in abusing one another for being either too optimistic or too pessimistic to take much notice of an error of justice committed fifteen years ago. Besides, there was no party capital to be made out of it. Even the war was discussed from the party point of view. Mr. Asquith had announced that the fall of his government would be a national calamity, but the country had chanced the calamity in a sporting spirit.

"I think that we had better say that you were shipwrecked on a desert island," said Amelia. She feared providence, but feared her cook even more.

"I expect the kitchen is humming with theories. If I were you, my dear, I should explain nothing," suggested John.

Amelia sighed and rang the bell. "You don't know the modern servant," she protested.

John had realized that his home-coming might possibly produce some slight inconveniences, even a certain amount of embarrassment; but he had

failed to anticipate the necessity of his being explained to the servants. But in this wonderful scheme of civiliaztion that we have built up for ourselves, a scheme that makes us dependent upon other people for all the little graces and comforts of life, we no sooner surmount one obstacle than another, equally exasperating, confronts us. The caveman was not compelled to consider the prejudices of his domestic staff; he roared defiance to the world, and went on his way rejoicing, clubbing into insensibility those who could not or would not agree with him. It is true that he was unable to indulge in gramophones, Persian rugs, afternoon tea, hot and cold running water, and the other necessities of what certain cynics call an effeminate age; that he possessed no changes of raiment, and that he had few opportunities to impress his neighbors by a tactfully suggested display of luxuries. But, on the other hand, he could call his soul his own; he was not compelled to live in terror of what the servants would say, and of whether the second housemaid would object to Danish butter and be content with eggless bacon for breakfast at a time when eggs were scarce; he was not dependent upon one person to bring him his early tea, another to shave him and to brush his clothes, another to bring him his letters and newspapers, still another to dig his garden, and a tribe of others who had to be fed,

housed, and paid in order to exhibit him to the world as what is called "a man of means."

The war showed us not so much the trials and troubles of the poor, for the genuine poor have all the rich people's horror of giving themselves away, but the trials and troubles of the rich; one reads of poor helpless rich people, two in family, advertising for servants, prepared to pay any wages in reason, offering inducements ("Twelve servants kept. Liberal outings") to those who will answer the appeal, absolutely frantic with fear lest their ways of life should be upset, lest they should be compelled to live with only *nine* servants to brush them and wash them and keep them decent, when they had always lived with *ten*. Such trials are a tragedy, though self-imposed. Picture "Bachelor, twelve servants kept" having to get up without being called, to fry his own rasher, make his own coffee, polish his own boots, groom his own horses, plant his own potatoes, find his own clean socks, and make his way through the long vista of days unshepherded by his faithful retinue. He would be lost, he would fall by the wayside in despair. He has grown so accustomed to being looked after by other people that he is totally incompetent to look after himself. And that is the kind of artificial civilization we have striven to produce, and, having produced and brought to a fine art, we are prouder of than

anything else. Such an existence is the ideal for which all Anglo-Saxons long, which they hope to achieve, and, having once achieved, will never let go. Music, literature, painting, science—the creative arts—are only a means to an end; they mean nothing to the average Englishman. The average Englishman likes to swank about Shakespeare, whose work he seldom reads, but he has a whole-hearted reverence for the Duke of Westminster.

To the average Englishman, a life of luxurious ease and dependence on a staff of sycophantic servants is the only life that is really worth while. The man who can do anything is not wanted; the man who can do one thing or be one thing, if it is only being rich, and do it or be it wholeheartedly, will win the respect and admiration of the nation. If he makes epigrams, he must go on making epigrams; if he is a philanthropist, he must continue to give; if he is a specially prominent unit of Society with a big "S," he must always dress the part; if he is a politician, he must persevere to uphold the political banner on which is engraved in letters of gold, "We are hard to move." In fact, an Englishman must choose his part (or accept it) and continue to play it for all it is worth; he must not indulge in new readings or study to bring out subtle meanings; if the stage directions tell him to sit on a top-hat,

he must sit on it "good and hard"; if they provide for "tears in his voice," the said tears must be of the extra large size; if they tell him to retire up stage and watch the leading man, he must watch that gentleman for the rest of his life and gain kudos from the press for his admirable watching manner; if they tell him to be funny, he must be very funny indeed. England will forgive a man anything except irreverence for tradition, lack of the sporting instinct, or a change of opinion.

Such thoughts were crowding through John's brain as he sipped his glass of French vermouth and gazed out of the window. Suddenly he became aware of the parlor-maid. "Has your bag come, sir?" she asked.

John looked up with a delightful expression of concern on his face. "I 'm afraid my bag has gone astray; I shall be obliged to borrow from Mr. Arthur."

"The oak room, Parsons," said Amelia. "It has a bath-room attached," she added, after Parsons had closed the door.

"Thank you, my dear!" replied John a little grimly. "I am sure I shall be very comfortable."

CHAPTER VIII

Reformer (bewildered): The noise is deafening. I cannot think.
Gilded Youth: We don't want to think; it would be the death of us.
Pro Patria, Act I.

JOHN passed a restless night in the luxurious bed belonging to the oak room that had a bath-room attached. He was too comfortable to sleep. After fifteen years of a plank bed, a spring mattress was a curious change. You can get accustomed to almost anything if you persevere, but your physical parts cry out at having to adjust themselves to new positions. There is a grim streak of humor in life.

John tried to control his thoughts, but eventually gave up in despair. His brain was abnormally active, and his memory-cells were discharging pictures like a cinematograph. His trial, his journey to Portland, his hideously monotonous life there, came back to him in crude pictures. He turned on the electric light at the head of his bed and tried to read, but the words danced before his eyes. He put out the light and drew the curtains, allowing the moonlight to flood the room. He wondered whether Amelia was awake too, and, if so, of what she was thinking.

Toward four o'clock he fell asleep and dreamed that he was back in prison.

When he awoke the country was bathed in sunshine; it was eight o'clock, and in the distance a church bell was ringing. Parsons entered with a cup of China tea, and took away his clothes to be brushed. After all, life could be extremely comfortable in a house staffed with competent servants.

A warm bath was a luxury he had not enjoyed for fifteen years; he reveled in it. Then he remembered that he had no razor. Should he ring? Would it annoy Amelia if he did? Had any member of his family sufficient imagination to realize his toilet deficiencies? Parsons knocked at the door of his bedroom and entered with a fitted suit-case containing razors, brushes, and other articles of comfort. John felt he would like to give Parsons a sovereign, but unfortunately he had no money—another troublesome affair that would have to be arranged.

He shaved, dressed, and went downstairs and out into the garden. A Sabbath stillness was the dominant note. A sudden desire for food drew him to the dining-room. There were copper hot-water dishes on the sideboard; in them a choice selection of breakfast dainties. He helped himself to bacon and eggs, and Parsons brought in a pot of coffee, a jug of hot milk, and some fresh

toast. "Breakfast is a movable feast on Sundays, sir," she observed, glancing round to see that all was in order. She left the room, returning a moment later with the *Observer,* the *Referee,* and that curious picture paper containing a column of gossip written by the second footman at a well-known house in Park Lane, chronicling the observations made to him by various prominent people, including the stars of the stage. Its name is very difficult to remember, but the paper itself is widely read by the middle classes, and freely quoted from.

John finished his breakfast without interruption, and then settled himself in a luxurious armchair in the living-room, with the Sunday papers and those that he could find of the previous day's issue. On a small table at his side was a silver box containing cigarettes, together with a match-stand and an ash-tray. He lighted a cigarette, and heaved a sigh of relief; he could faintly taste the tobacco. Outside the birds were singing and the sun was shining; indoors everything was deliciously quiet and peaceful.

He took up the papers and realized that his country was at war.

He read steadily through most of them, including the leading articles. Much of what he read was Greek to him—new phrases, new slang, new names continued to intrude. Things were evi-

dently not going too well with the nation. Food was short (he remembered his breakfast with gratitude), the cost of living was high, ministers were incompetent. America had come in, but it would be some time before she was ready to send an army overseas. One set of papers smilingly proclaimed that all was well; another hinted at startling revelations. He looked at the theatrical advertisements; he failed to recognize most of the names displayed in large type. What had become of Irving and Hare and Wyndham? What were these things they called revues? He looked through the Parliamentary reports. "The Prime Minister—Mr. Lloyd-George!" He sat back in his arm-chair, chuckling.

It was curious to have a sort of black curtain drawn across fifteen years of one's life, but what one saw when the curtain rose was even more amazing. Great men fallen, obscure politicians in office, new slogans, new shibboleths, a coalition government, Ireland still unhappy; the bishops, with cotton-wool in their ears to drown the roar of the guns, academically debating whether the late lamented Charles Stuart should be officially recognized as a saint; tribunals—some exempting everyone, others exempting none; a food controller, himself a retired tradesman, beating a tomtom in honor of the once despised potato, and issuing orders and instructions that were

sufficiently contradictory to suggest Savoy Opera. Which reminded John: why were not Gilbert and Sullivan operas a permanent feature of London entertainments? In Savoy Opera, England had produced something no other nation could touch or improve upon; but Gilbert and Sullivan, like Shakespeare, were evidently neglected by Londoners. Perhaps Westminster feared the influence of a rival in topsy-turvy humor.

"I should like to see 'Iolanthe' or 'The Mikado,'" sighed John, lighting another cigarette; "and I have n't the slightest desire to solve the mysteries of 'Next, Please' or 'Mind the Step' or 'Splish Splosh,' even with an unequaled beauty chorus—whatever that may be."

This was unenterprising. "Splish Splosh" was an attraction to which crowds flocked nightly; it set the fashion in conversational colloquialisms and its catch phrases were universally quoted. The music was not too subtle for the average intelligence, and scarcely ever erred on the side of being inaudible to the gallery. In fact, when the musical director let himself go, it was difficult to hear the roar of the motor omnibus in Piccadilly Circus, a quarter of a mile from the temporary home of "Splish Splosh." A stranger might be inclined to wonder what it was all about; but the audience had no doubts. There were no hidden meanings in "Splish Splosh"; the jokes

were admirably underlined, and the comedians were made up to look funny. The beauty chorus maintained that air of being a beauty chorus that constitutes its sole attraction.

There were moments of hand-clutching sentimentality. "I have never loved a girl but you," sang the light baritone from the Bowery; and impressionable subalterns, home on leave, breathed soft nothings into the shell-like ears of charming maidens whose names they had forgotten, while the maidens, who would have and had had the same soft nothings breathed into their ears many times, by other equally impressionable subalterns home on leave, responded in the usual way.

A comedian in a comic hat exchanged friendly badinage with a comedian of the depressed order. It was a sporting contest; each was out to get laughs, and the three-hundred-a-week comedian eventually scored over the two-hundred-and-fifty-a-week comedian, much to the joy of the seven-and-sixpence-a-day subaltern and the shilling-a-day Tommy in the gallery. Life on leave was a round of rag-time; ladies in five-hundred-guinea frocks sang (or tried to sing) rag-time comments on war economies; ladies crowned with priceless displays of ospreys sang (in rag-time) dainty ditties that pointed out the virtues of kindness or the pleasures of bird life; the far-famed beauty

chorus, in rag-time, displayed their physical attractions to an amazingly generous extent; the wit was out (evidently on leave), but a Rabelaisian facetiousness had taken its place. The orchestra did its best to hide the deficiencies of melody by making a great deal of noise, just as the comedians hid the lack of wit in the dialogue by facial expression and a good deal of suggestion. The feverish excitement of the whole amazing entertainment never ceased until the curtain had fallen on the finale. "Splish Splosh" was typical of life in London in the comparatively early days of the war.

About half-past ten Amelia came downstairs, arrayed for church. She looked extraordinarily young and pretty, and John, in spite of himself, felt his heart miss a beat.

"Are you coming to church?" she inquired, buttoning her gloves.

"No, my dear, thank you!" said John. "My church-going has been compulsory for the last fifteen years, and I fancy my soul can stand a day off."

"I suppose you are right," replied Amelia; "though I should have thought that under the circumstances—getting your freedom so unexpectedly, so miraculously—" She looked at him a little reproachfully.

John laughed. "My dear! because the in-

scrutable decrees of providence caused me to spend fifteen years of my life in prison for another man's offense, it does n't follow that I am overwhelmed with gratitude when providence decides to end the joke; it does n't remove my grudge against providence; neither does it give me any abnormal admiration for its methods of justice. I don't feel disposed to go down on my knees in thankfulness because providence—as the saying goes—has discovered its error in time; though I might perhaps put up a prayer that it may be more careful in future."

Amelia frowned. "I hope you have n't developed a spirit of irony. No one understands it —in England; at any rate, not in our set."

"I have developed nothing but a capacity for enjoyment of the humor of life. I even saw the humor of the prison system," said John. "My idea of curing a man of criminal instincts would be to surround him with love, belief, and beauty—none of which qualities are conspicuous at Portland."

"I hope you don't think I 've brought our children up carelessly?" asked Amelia, who had a genius for switching off from one subject to another without warning.

John paused to blow some smoke through his nose. "I have conceived a colossal admiration for our children. They are delightful, and their

tact is amazing, while their consideration toward me is quite touching. They have almost made me feel at home," he added quietly.

Amelia was at times a puzzle to herself. She had prayed that John would behave exactly as he *had* behaved, and now that he had obeyed her unspoken wishes she felt strangely resentful toward him for having done so. He was so quiet, so self-contained, so undemonstrative. Of course it was a tremendous relief; but—had he forgotten? Did he no longer love her as he had once loved her, whole-heartedly, passionately, as a man should love his wife? Amelia did not want to be taken for granted; she wanted to be wooed and won, all over again. At least, she thought she did. She wanted John to take up the old life gradually, tactfully; she did not want him to accept her attitude as final. He could n't love her if he accepted things like that. And she wanted to be loved—she wanted it terribly. The more deeply she felt a thing, the less she showed it—as a rule. Their companionship had been so perfect in the old days. But now—John was behaving as though she were a stranger, as though he were a visitor. It chilled her advances; it muzzled her, preventing her from saying all the things that came to her lips and then retired, snubbed, afraid to materialize. Was John disappointed with her? Had she grown old—and

plain? Was he disappointed with the children? What was he thinking—under that mask of gentle irony and courteous deference? Had he been as embarrassed at meeting her again as she had been at meeting him?

"Did I tell you that Arthur is engaged to be married?" she asked.

John looked up, his face full of interest.

"She is the only daughter of Lord and Lady Gratham; they live near Chenies. Chloe is very charming, and they are devoted to each other. It would be a great pity if anything should interfere with their engagement."

"What *should* interfere with it?" inquired John.

"Lord and Lady Gratham will have to be told. You see,"—Amelia hesitated a little—"they thought I was a widow."

"And I shall have to be explained to them—as I was to the servants?"

Amelia put her hand on his arm appealingly.

"Do you want me to go and call and explain in person?" inquired John, patting her hand soothingly.

Amelia had discussed the subject that morning with Arthur. Arthur had insisted on seeing the thing through himself, and had already motored over to Chenies. Arthur did not believe in postponing unpleasant necessities.

"I'm afraid I shall want a good deal of explaining," said John; "but it's good experience for Arthur if he intends to follow a diplomatic career."

"I don't think Chloe will mind; she is very modern. And Lady Gratham will be all right—as long as there is no fuss. But Lord Gratham is a terrible Tory, and very difficult to convince, once he has made up his mind about anything," said Amelia reflectively.

It would scarcely be logical, thought John, to blame Arthur because his father had been the victim of a judicial error; but, after all, a member of the Upper House was rarely logical.

"I suppose Arthur must fight his own battles," sighed Amelia.

"It will be a very good education for him," said John.

"He did very well at Cambridge," protested Amelia.

"A man only begins his education when he leaves the 'varsity," said John. "Education consists of knowing what to unlearn. I hope Arthur has n't acquired the academic mind?"

"What *is* the academic mind?" inquired Amelia, a little puzzled.

"The curse of party politics, the result of theories acquired at second hand, too much classical education and too little common sense.

Most young men catch the disease, or they did in my day," added John, smiling reminiscently. "Some grow out of it, others don't. Politicians and the minor clergy, and a certain type of critic and journalist, are the worst offenders—barring private secretaries to Cabinet Ministers, who are its prophets."

There was a slight pause, broken by a chuckle from John. Strangely enough, the same thought had occurred to him in the same words in which it had occurred to Amelia.

It is a curious psychological coincidence that a husband and wife who are very close to each other in thought should so often be visited by the same idea expressed in almost the same words.

"I wonder whether you were as embarrassed at meeting me as I was at meeting you?" inquired John.

"How could I know what the separation and the suffering would have done to you?" replied Amelia thoughtfully. "It might have brutalized you." She shuddered a little. "But it seems to have made you more chivalrous even than you used to be. It was a great gamble, John, your coming home."

"When I got into the train to come to London, I looked at myself in the mirror, and I saw—a stranger," said John. "I was prepared for you to see a stranger, too."

She hesitated. "A man must always be something of a stranger after fifteen years. The children thought me nervous, hysterical, strung-up; I was n't, John! I was merely—afraid."

John nodded. He understood; he was gifted—or cursed—with an imaginative insight into other people's minds. He could picture his wife's kaleidoscopic brain when the news that he was coming home first reached her. He had an enormous sympathy for women; he understood their point of view as far as a man can grasp such psychological subtleties. He had been intimate with few of them; he had loved only one—his wife—and he still loved her. Had she forgotten how they had once loved? Could she fear the man to whom she had so entirely surrendered herself? Was her shrinking the result of a failing memory, of a love long dead, or was it due to a kind of esthetic fastidiousness? Was she dreading the intimacies of married life? Or had she ceased to believe in the innate chivalry of the average decently bred man?

Amelia had not forgotten, but it all seemed like an unreal and beautiful dream. She could not bring herself to believe that their life together had actually happened. She must be honest with him; she owed him that. But she must also be honest with herself, true to herself. Her frankness had always been one of her

greatest attributes; it was the frankness of a child. John appreciated it deeply. If they were both honest with each other, misunderstandings and other matrimonial pitfalls could be avoided or bridged over.

"You felt that time had mocked our troth?" he asked sympathetically; "and that the hopes and beliefs that had come to us in those wonderful spring days of our life together were nothing but ashes?"

Amelia nodded. She had clutched at reality, but it had eluded her. One thought had continued to hammer in her brain: who was this man who was coming back to her, the man who called himself her husband? He could n't be the lover for whose memory she had shed so many tears, for that lover had never actually existed, except in her dreams. At least, so it had seemed to her then. Who was he? and how was she to pretend that nothing had changed?

John had had that same curious loss of identity when walking up from the station, that perplexing sense of unreality; but it had passed on meeting his wife.

"When we said good-by I was almost a girl," said Amelia a little bitterly—for she clung to youth with the same instinct that makes a half-drowned sailor cling to a spar. "I was young and slim and pretty. You once told me that I had

the rare gift of looking pretty even when I cried."

"I didn't exaggerate," murmured John, smiling at the recollection her words produced.

"Look at me now!" she cried, challenging him to tell her the truth. She stood with her back to the window: a woman rarely discards a legitimate handicap.

John looked at her for some seconds. She flushed a little under his close scrutiny, and her heart gave a sudden leap as she realized that he could see only the girl he had seen fifteen years ago, the girl he had seen in his dreams during all those cruel, empty years. If her instinct was right, why didn't he tell her so? She wanted him to tell her. But he was so detached, so courteous, so impersonal. "My mirror doesn't lie," she cried defiantly.

"Neither do my eyes," said John.

"I hope your eyes will be kind when they open to realities," pleaded Amelia, nervously buttoning the other glove.

Realities? Yes; they would have to establish a *modus vivendi.* What should it be? They must settle down and face the situation. But how? Were they to be husband and wife, or was he still to be a privileged visitor? What was her attitude? How did she feel about all these things? Should they go away together, to renew their acquaintanceship? Could it be a sort of

Indian-summer honeymoon? He broached the question.

"I think that would be unwise," she replied, "and a little unfair to our children. You have to make their acquaintance, too!"

John laughed; he would be kept rather busy.

"By the way," he exclaimed suddenly, "when am I to have the pleasure of making Seppy's acquaintance?" Amelia looked up, frowning a little. "Shall I have to be explained to him—as I was to cook?" he added in a voice slightly tinged with irony.

"I am quite ready to laugh at him *myself,* John," she protested; "but it irritates me to have other people laughing at him. He has been a very good friend to me. The children think him a little ridiculous, a little exaggerated; but no woman of my age could help feeling a certain admiration for a man who devoted himself so entirely to her interests."

"My dear!" said John, "*I* am prepared to devote *my* entire life to your interests; it is the only privilege I retain. But if Seppy and I are both on the same job it may cause complications."

"That is exactly what I want to avoid," replied Amelia. "Seppy has earned my friendship; I can't withdraw it suddenly without a reason. It would n't be fair. You can see that, can't you, John?"

"Certainly!" he agreed. "If you can argue such a thing from a reasonable point of view?"

Amelia had never been very deep; she had been clinging. She had clung to her husband, and had worshiped him; and he had been snatched out of her life, leaving her with nothing to cling to. She had done her duty to their children, but that had filled only part of her life. No reasonable woman thinks of her children to the exclusion of every other interest. She was still young —still a woman. Some people might think it horrid, but it was not horrid really, it was natural that some women could not be content just to be mothers. They needed to be thought of as women too. "It does n't imply that I 'm not loyal," argued Amelia; "and it does n't imply that I am frivolous." What it *did* imply was that she was tremendously conscientious.

Some women are far more conscientious where other people are concerned than they are with regard to themselves and their own affairs. Amelia was a conscientious guardian of her most cherished memories; she kept them locked up in her heart, and wore the key where she could feel it night and day. She had been forced to wrap up her memories of her husband, and to put them away in a drawer, sacred to her youth. For the sake of her children, she had tried to forget— and to look forward. But she was not the type

of woman who could look forward to loneliness unafraid. No man could ever be to her what John had once been; but that did not make it inevitable that she should rule all men for ever out of her life. And now that he had come home, he must either win her all over again, win her entirely, or they would have to be content with memories—and friendship. She was still a woman—a woman who had been robbed of fifteen years of her youth—and she clung desperately to what remained of the youth that made her still desirable.

"Is there yet the ghost of the youth you once loved in *me?* Can you again materialize it?" John asked, echoing her unspoken thoughts.

"Admiration—devotion—love—can keep a woman young when the years deny her the right," replied Amelia rather wistfully.

John looked at her keenly. "Is it Seppy's admiration and devotion that have kept you young, in spite of tragic memories?" he asked.

"Yes," said Amelia quietly; "and I am grateful. What woman could *help* being grateful?"

"It brings us back to the elemental, does n't it?" asked John, smiling. "Seppy and I will have to take off the gloves."

Amelia frowned. It was not the subject for a joke. John's theory that one must take life with a laugh or perish mentally had always irri-

tated her. John would laugh on the scaffold. She shivered at the thought. How near he had been to proving her point! But no reasonable woman makes fun of her emotions or laughs at the source from which they spring.

"Are you very shocked at what I've said?" she asked. "Are you very disappointed? Do you feel as though you have been cheated out of your rights?"

"My dear!" said John, "a man has no rights that he doesn't earn. I have the privilege of being, I hope, a welcome visitor in this house, and if I cannot be content with that, it is up to me to win the larger privileges."

"Thank you, John!" Amelia took up her prayer-book, slipped half a crown into her left-hand glove, and gave a final readjustment to her hat. "And now I think I had better go to church."

"Will you pray for a miracle?" inquired John a little grimly.

"I don't know what I shall pray for; I am constitutionally unfitted to decide things for myself," said Amelia, with a sigh. "I think I shall just pray for everything to come right."

John chuckled: it was the national habit of evading responsibility. Fortunately, Amelia did not notice his amusement.

"Aren't you going to church?" she inquired as

Olive entered the room apparently dressed for motoring.

"No, mother. As you would n't go motoring with Mr. Jordan, I 'm going instead," replied Olive, assured by her father's presence that argument would be barred.

"Who is Mr. Jordan?" inquired John, looking up from a perusal of Mr. Garvin's views on the general situation.

"We met him in Paris," replied Olive, adjusting her veil, "just before the war. We were staying at the same hotel, and he was so attentive to mother that she naturally could n't resist asking him to call. He has been calling ever since. He takes her motoring, and to theaters and concerts—when Seppy is off duty."

"Has *he* been a good friend, *too?*" asked John, with a mischievous twinkle.

"Mr. Jordan has the rare faculty of making a woman feel she is doing him a favor in accepting his hospitality," said Amelia reproachfully.

John smiled. "I should be far more afraid of the man who made you feel he was doing you a favor in offering it."

"He has heaps of money, and no one to help him spend it," explained Olive. "He 's very nice to me when mother is busy—and I 'm trying to teach him English."

"American men always make a chaperone feel

she is welcome—under any circumstances," said Amelia.

Olive laughed. "A chaperone? I like that, mother! If anyone is the chaperone, it 's *me*. I never get a chance to be anything else."

Amelia frowned and changed the subject.

"Where is Jimmy?" she inquired. "Is he coming to church?"

"He 's in the bath-room, lazy little beast!" said the young Harrovian's sister. "He said you could represent him at church, mother, and he hoped breakfast would n't be late."

The gentle purring of a thousand-guinea car broke the summer silence.

"Would you like a drive, father?" asked Olive.

"No, thank you, my dear! I 'm very comfortable," replied John.

"I expect you have a lot to say to mother. Oh, I forgot she was going to church! Never mind! There are heaps of books. And you might have a chat with Jimmy; he badly needs a father's hand at times."

"Do you mean to lean on?" inquired John.

"No," replied Olive emphatically; "the other thing."

CHAPTER IX

Reformer: What is the motto on the badge you are all wearing?
Merchant: "Business as usual." . . . Excuse me! I have an engagement to play golf. [*Exit.*

Pro Patria, Act 2.

THE English habit of taking things for granted, together with the national dislike of explaining things, are difficult attributes for a foreigner to grasp. He comes to England, anxious to learn the point of view; but, unless he is prepared to remain for an indefinite period, his education in that respect continues to be neglected. The Englishman's point of view is rarely what it appears to be, and he never explains it to anyone. After many years' residence the guest suddenly recognizes the fact, and it either irritates or charms him. Foreigners wonder why the English invariably hang out their dirty linen for the whole world to gaze upon, and it takes some years to realize that they do it out of pride. This pride in themselves as a nation is so intense that they can afford to make themselves out much worse than they really are; hence the national aptitude for grousing. Strangers criticize the British and their methods, and the British invariably agree

with them; but they never alter either their methods or their philosophy.

In the English country it is taken for granted that everyone knows where everyone else lives; no one would dream of having "Belle Vue" or "Chatsworth" painted on his gates, unless he was a suburbanite who had strayed into the country by accident, after a lifetime spent in catching the eight-fifty train to the City. For in the suburbs no one knows who anyone is, and those who do are not quite certain. They merely guess at one another's incomes. But the suburbs do not represent England; they are a kind of half-way house between the transient and the permanent. The man who takes a pride in the architecture of a suburb, or cares what becomes of it after he himself has ceased to sleep in one of its aggressive villas, may have acquired a dawning sense of patriotism, but it is still in the elementary stage. When a man says to you: "I 'm a Sussex man!" he speaks as one of the salt of the earth, and glories in the fact; but could anyone imagine a sane person glorying in the fact that he was born at Upper Tooting?

Jordan had been in England for some years, but he still liked to have things explained to him. He was ready to accept the English point of view in reason, but there were moments when the Eagle ruffled its feathers in amazement.

"I guess I'm a little late," he remarked anxiously as Parsons ushered him into the living-room.

"Not at all," said Olive. "You haven't met my father, have you?"

Jordan gasped. "Your father? I—I didn't know you *had* a father; that is, I didn't know you had a father living."

"Neither did we—until yesterday," said Olive calmly; "though I think mother ought to have told *you*." The emphasis on the "you" was a score to her, but a trifle crude.

Jordan grasped John's hand and shook it warmly. "I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, sir!" he said.

"And I to make yours, Mr. Jordan!" replied John.

Jordan heaved a sigh of embarrassment. "I had always heard that the English left things to explain themselves," he remarked.

"Father has been in prison," explained Olive politely.

Jordan blinked. He thought he had been well steeled against surprises where the English were concerned, but his first line of defense had been very nearly carried. "I beg your pardon?" he ejaculated.

"They thought he had done something he hadn't done; and now they have found out that

someone else did it, they have let him out," said Olive.

Jordan drew a deep breath. "Excuse me!" he remarked. "When William of Normandy conquered Great Britain, I guess he rang up the Lord Mayor, London, and said: 'Are you there? Excuse me! I 've conquered your country; but I 'm always at home for afternoon tea if you 'd care to drop in!' and let it go at that."

John protested. "William did n't *really* conquer England, Mr. Jordan; England eventually conquered him and his successors. The English spirit is unconquerable; you can't argue with it!"

"I wonder if the other William realizes what he 's up against," said Jordan.

"We did n't bother much about the war at Portland," replied John.

"Some people don't bother much about it—out of Portland," reflected Jordan.

"I expect Germany is jealous of the Albert Memorial and wants to set it up in Berlin," suggested John.

"You don't take your country's peril seriously," Jordan protested.

"Why worry, Mr. Jordan," replied John genially, "while we have heaven and the *Daily Mail* to guide us? We have often been in peril before; we have grown accustomed to being in peril. After all, we are in deadly peril every

time we indulge in that delicious harlequinade called a general election. War may bring sorrow to the individual, bankruptcy to the patriot, wealth to the profiteer, and security to the indispensable; but it does n't alter us fundamentally. We always take a year or two to think it over, a year or two to prepare for it, a year or two to quarrel about who is to take charge of it, a year or two to fight it out, and a century or so in squaring up accounts. We make the same mistakes, the same miscalculations, the same resolutions for the avoidance of those same mistakes; and then a new craze comes along, a boxing bout or a golf tournament, and we forget all about our preparations for defense and let things slide. The average Englishman, Mr. Jordan, will realize Germany's intentions and have Germany's methods brought home to him only when he sees Uhlans in Piccadilly; and even then he will be too busy selling 'presents from London' to the Uhlans to worry very much."

"Excuse me!" said Jordan stiffly. "Your British soldiers and sailors have proved themselves miracles. It is an honor, sir, to be allied with you on that account, if on no other."

"Thank you, Mr. Jordan." John smiled his acknowledgment of the testimonial. Being an average Englishman, he took such things for granted.

"I agree with you that London has reached a point hitherto unknown in its love of luxury and display," continued Jordan. "The war does not appear to have sobered the nation. Everything is booming."

John thought of the commercial traveler's talk on the train.

"Talking of luxuries, Mr. Jordan, how do you manage to wangle enough petrol to go joy-riding?" inquired Olive.

"Pardon me!" interrupted John. "What is the meaning of 'wangle' and 'joy-ride'?"

"Wangle is an army term: it means getting something you are not entitled to in a perfectly legitimate manner," explained Olive. "And joy-ride is American for using petrol on urgent private affairs."

John had spoken of the Norman invasion as though it had happened yesterday. The English have long memories, but little imagination; they bow to the past, but ignore the future. John had not realized the American invasion, which was an accomplished fact. It had begun fifteen years ago, at the time of his retirement from active interest in life.

"Now we talk American so naturally that we don't realize it is n't English," said Olive; "you even read of 'stunts' in leading articles, and our armies march to rag-time."

It was perfectly true. America had responded to England's call for help, and had sent her representatives to teach American business methods. Rattigan, that pioneer of the great department store, had gone over to show London how a great shop could be run with efficiency and courtesy; he had welcomed English customers to his establishment, and they were not assailed by importunate hand-washing shopwalkers, neither were they looked upon with suspicion if they wandered around looking at the tempting display of things for sale; they were made to feel at home, and invited to look upon Rattigan's as a kind of club where they could meet their friends, write their letters, rest and refresh themselves, and, if the spirit moved them, buy something they needed or thought they did. Even men, shop-haters as a sex, were attracted by Rattigan's. And the attendants were so obliging; they never fired contemptuous looks at the nervous shopper, they helped her to make up her mind, and, if she was incapable of that, they made it up *for* her. Undoubtedly Rattigan was a genius, for he understood human nature, and allowed it to be understood that dividends were the last things he desired, and that his patron's comfort and satisfaction were his one and immediate object. A few conventional shop assistants managed to obtain employment there, but they were quickly "fired";

they failed to represent the atmosphere. And if Rattigan was a genius, Jordan was his prophet.

America had also taken charge of the British theater. The British theater, which had won its position by producing French adaptations, German farces, and Austrian comic operas, had fallen into a bad rut. Some foolish and ignorant managers had been brave enough to produce plays by English dramatists, not amateur playwrights with an established position in society, but genuine, hard-working, modest, self-effacing British dramatists, and, naturally, there had been a national outcry. British plays, like British music and British paintings, were not fashionable. The British habit of self-depreciation had killed the creative arts and ruined the creative artists. And, when the war broke out, managers grew panicky. They anticipated ruin. They revived old plays—the least representative they could lay their hands on; and, naturally, the public failed to respond. Then one enterprising manager, braving the dangers of the submarine, went to New York and suggested transplanting the English theater to America, a project that failed lamentably, and the American theater to England, a project that proved an immediate success. There was a boom in American plays. Comedies made in America: farces made in America; revues made in America; comic operas made in America, were advertised

from every bill-board. English managers, who hesitated to pay an English dramatist a hundred pounds in advance of royalties, paid thousands for an option on any American play. Dances being tabu, and entertainments in private houses considered bad form, the theater became the sole center of amusement; and England's gallant ally reaped the benefit. Those great American dramatists, Mr. Hermann Ollendorf, Miss Rachel Ikinstein, Mr. Grant Sherman Katzenjammer, and others of the little coterie that has its finger on the pulse of the Great White Way, would sit in the basement of a *Rathskellar* between 34th and 42d streets on Broadway, New York, drinking steins of lager beer and munching *Weinerwurst,* counting their royalties with amazement; while neglected British dramatists who were not in the army sat in the smoking-room of the Garrick Club, wondering when native talent would get a look in.

There are nine hundred and ninety-nine mistakes a British creative artist can make before he succeeds in producing a masterpiece; but the one irreparable error he commits is that of being born an Englishman.

"Bedad! It 's like takin' money from a blind beggar," chuckled Mr. Tim Dooley, the sentimental but clear-thinking managing director of some thirty-seven "incorporations," as he pock-

eted a check for ten thousand dollars premium drawn by the English theatrical manager who desired to produce the celebrated farce "Aunty's Undies."

"It 's very nice of Mr. Jordan to put up with *me,*" said Olive; "I 'm sure mother is heaps more amusing."

John looked at Amelia, a little perplexed. "Are you fond of motoring?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Amelia, "very. Why?"

"I shall buy a car," said John; "I shall learn to drive." He looked at her again. "Does Seppy take you joy-riding?" he inquired, his eyes alight with humor.

"He *did,*" said Olive, "until the W.O. stepped in with army order number two million and twenty-nine and put a stop to it. Even a staff officer has to obey army orders after they have been translated into English."

"I shall buy *two* cars," said John.

Amelia looked at him. It was difficult to tell when John was in earnest. If you took a joke seriously it was a score to him, but if you took a serious thing as a joke you invariably paid for it before long.

A man's joke to a woman is like the Irishman's foot—rather heavy-handed.

"My dear Amelia, why *should n't* I take you motoring?" inquired John, with that peculiar

gravity which, in a man, invariably conceals a chuckle. "I 'm hanged if I 'll be content to joy-ride in the chimney-corner, all by myself!"

"Oh, father! How splendid!" cried Olive. "Now perhaps *I* shall get a chance."

Amelia radiated annoyance. "Please don't be silly, John," she said rather reprovingly. "You will make Mr. Jordan feel embarrassed."

"I should *like* him to feel embarrassed," replied John gravely, his gravity mocked by the twinkle in his eyes. "I shall buy a car to-morrow, and when he next offers to take you motoring, I shall turn him over to Olive and take you myself."

"If you 're going to talk nonsense, I think I had better go to church," said Amelia, once again gathering up her impedimenta.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Jordan, for all the attention you have shown to my wife," said John; "but in future you will have a rival!"

Jordan smiled. "I guess I 'm sufficiently a sportsman to know when I 'm beaten," he admitted. "May we give you a lift in the car, Mrs. Osborne?" he added, with that courteous deference that is impossible to imitate.

"Please don't trouble," said Amelia; "I prefer to walk."

"Mother does n't mean to monopolize all the men who come here," explained Olive, after her

mother had taken her departure; "she does it unconsciously. She has a very strong will; but only a woman could realize that."

"Don't *you* like men?" asked Jordan, a little puzzled.

"Oh, yes!" replied Olive. "I think they are lots of fun. But they 're not necessary to me. I like going out with a man, but I should be just as happy taking out the dogs."

After he had watched their departure in the car, John settled down once more to his pile of newspapers; but his thoughts wandered and played around new impressions he was receiving every hour. Jordan was a nice fellow; Americans were nearly always amusing—and interesting. After all, the English had an ineradicable habit of looking upon Americans as their own people—separated from them politically but not socially. It was a harmless little national vanity, and the really nice American usually took it in the spirit in which it was meant. And Jordan was evidently proud of his British ancestry—which proved he was a good fellow.

John returned to his papers; he enjoyed their attitude toward the war—and toward those interests each particular newspaper was supposed to represent. Here was one proving indubitably that the stoppage of racing meant the extinction of blooded stock. Besides, what would happen to

all the bookmakers and punters, to the jockeys and stable-boys, and to the thousand and one components of that heterogeneous crowd known to fame as racing men, if racing were forbidden? It would be better that the transport service should be held up for want of petrol, soldiers' leave stopped for want of railway accommodation, than to risk extinction of British blooded stock. The one fact that particular newspaper failed to remark was: what would happen to the blooded stock if the Germans swarmed over Newmarket Heath and the Hampshire and Wiltshire Downs?

Another newspaper reminded John of the small boy who kept saying: "You wyte till my father comes 'ome; 'e 'll give you what for!" This one had little to say concerning the war, but quite a lot about Mr. Winston Churchill. After some study, John came to the conclusion that the journal in question did n't like Mr. Churchill very much, and disapproved of his ideas. There was a serious weekly, edited by a well-known publicist; it reminded him of an anemic curate playing bagatelle with some Durhan coal-miners. And a popular Sunday paper, featuring another publicist, whose views, for which the educated classes waited anxiously during the week, were set forth rather in the manner of a headmaster addressing the lower school.

And, best of all, the *Morning Megaphone,*

striking an attitude in the center of the stage and reminding its enraptured audience that "me and 'eaven is 'ere!"

Indeed, it would be a sad thing for the nation if the journalists ceased to take themselves seriously.

And what a luxury it was to sit in a comfortable chair! He would be perfectly happy doing nothing else.

What curious people his countrymen were! The men who did things had n't time to talk about them, and the men who talked about them had n't time to *do* them.

The Americans talked about them while they were doing them.

Just as a politician was a man who made speeches, and a statesman a man who made nations.

He pulled himself up with a start. The old fascination of having three long columns to fill up with his own ideas and aphorisms—phrases that would be quoted and discussed throughout the country—had asserted itself. It was the result of reading the views of the newer school of publicists. He would give up reading newspapers. He took up the *Referee*.

CHAPTER X

Let me be acclaimed by the children, and their parents can vote for whom they please!

Pro Patria, Act 4.

ABOUT half-past eleven Jimmy, having concluded a satisfactory breakfast consisting of a pound or two of ripe gooseberries, some porridge and cream, kedgeree, bacon and eggs, a slice of cold ham, four cups of coffee, and seven or eight slices of toast and marmalade, strolled carelessly into the living-room, feeling a little more fit to face the troubles and the frazzles of the British Sunday; but he pulled up short at the sight of his father, who looked like a small piece of humanity entirely surrounded by newspapers.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "Where 's the mater?"

"She has gone to church," replied John, putting down the *Referee* and facing his son. Each, man-like, felt that it was inevitable that they should make each other's acquaintance, and each, man-like, was seized with an instinctive desire to postpone the operation. Suppose either was to give himself away to the other!

Jimmy turned and steered toward the door in a sudden panic.

"Where are you off to?" asked his father.

Jimmy was foiled. He looked at the ceiling, the floor, the newspapers, and the sunshine outside; he shifted from one leg to the other. He cleared his throat. "Oh, I was just going to rot about," he replied.

"Why not sit down and talk to me?" suggested his father.

Jimmy sighed. He moved a little farther into the room. Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton; Harrow must not linger in the rear. He seated himself on the arm of a Chesterfield; the position was not comfortable, but it was distinctly non-committal.

"Would n't you like to mouch round and see the dogs?" he asked.

It was awful having to stick indoors and make conversation with a man he had only just met and who might be inclined to play the heavy father.

John smiled. "I don't feel a bit inclined for compulsory exercise," he said.

Jimmy retired into his shell. He felt that he had let himself in for it, and he must see it through; but if the tone of the conversation should become too intimate—well! he would make a bolt for it.

"Olive gone out?" he inquired, staring gloomily at the window.

John nodded; he stole an amused glance at the representative of Harrovian training and tradition; then, speaking as one gentleman to another, "Do you smoke?" he asked.

Jimmy stared. Was he joking? Was he in earnest? Or was he trying to interfere? "Just once in a way. Not supposed to, y' know; bad form and all that," replied Harrow. "Only swabs do it in public."

John considered the question gravely. "Under the circumstances, do you think I might be permitted to offer you one of Arthur's cigarettes?" he inquired.

"Thanks," replied Jimmy coolly, taking a cigarette, tapping the end to get rid of loose tobacco, and lighting it with a match offered by his amazing parent; "Arthur's cigs are usually pretty decent."

There was an uncomfortable pause. Each was furtively eyeing the other, meditating a line of attack; each removed his cigarette, glanced at the brand, returned it to his lips, and inhaled a comforting volume of smoke.

"Do you like being at Harrow?" inquired his father casually.

"It 's all right," replied Jimmy, still retaining his non-committal attitude.

"Nice set of fellows?"

"Awfully decent—most of them."

"What do you go in for?"

"Cricket."

"Bowling or batting?"

"Bowling." Jimmy uncrossed his legs and slid on to the couch. This was a concession. John was evidently taking the right tack. "More chance of getting your flannels."

"Any specialty?" inquired his father.

Jimmy flushed a little; he was proud of his specialty, and consequently, as an Englishman, ashamed to speak of it. "Rotten sort of break both ways, and an occasional fast ball—without changing the action," he admitted.

John nodded appreciatively. Cricket was to him more than a game; it was a religion. He was beginning to like his younger son. "What about work?" he inquired invitingly.

"Oh, the usual rot!" replied his son in an offhand manner. "I 'm going to swot up enough to get to the 'varsity." He looked at his father dubiously. "I suppose I 'll have to go up?" he queried.

John exhaled some smoke. "Don't you want to?" he asked.

Jimmy considered the question. "I 'd like to—for the sake of the cricket. Though, bar rotting, y' know, I 'd like to have a shot at the R.F.C."

"Is that something new?" John vainly tried to remember what R.F.C. stood for.

"It was. 'T isn't now; everybody 's doing it. I 've been up a couple of times." Jimmy noticed his father's perplexed expression. "Flying, y' know; the Royal Flying Corps. Aviation. I've piloted a Rumpety round the house; solo, too! Don't say I said so, or the chap might get told off for letting me do it. He said it was n't half a bad show, and he had his wings up. He said my landing was fairly smooth; I thought myself it was fairly decent. It 's some sport—much more exciting than Greek." He suddenly stiffened. "Of course, if you don't approve—" he said.

"My dear fellow, don't imagine I want to interfere with your ambitions," protested his father.

"Very decent of you," said Jimmy. "If the war goes on, I ought to get into the Flying Corps in a couple of years."

"I gather, from the papers I have just been reading, that the big push of 1925 is going to do the trick—if we have enough airplanes by then," said John.

Jimmy smoked, apparently unperturbed. He was awaiting his father's next move. At a public school one was taught to play a waiting game. Even the huge influx of the middle classes into the public schools had not entirely upset traditions. Of course, lots of the men thought a bit too

much about money, and one or two of them sucked up to lords and dukes and all that rot; but the majority were pretty decent on the whole.

"Did it ever occur to you to wonder what it might be like to have a father?" asked John suddenly.

"It had occurred to Jimmy—once or twice—when his mother had been abnormally unresponsive; somehow, a house did n't seem properly furnished without a man in it—that is, a man who knew a thing or two about life, and could give a fellow tips about things he did n't happen to understand. Of course, his mother had been awfully decent, but she was a woman, and women did n't exactly catch on to things—at any rate, on to certain things. It was a bit awkward, finding a father when you were n't looking for him, but—

"I don't see why we should n't get on all right," said Jimmy.

"I don't see why we should n't be pals," suggested his father, with a smile.

Jimmy withdrew a little into his shell. Would n't it be ghastly if his father became emotional—as parsons often did, especially when preaching a Sunday evening sermon? "That 's rather rushing things, is n't it?" he suggested. "Of course, one never knows—"

John chuckled. "My father belonged to the

old school," he said; "he was very autocratic. We had to toe the line and come to attention pretty smartly."

Jimmy looked dubious. "I don't think we should care about that sort of parent nowadays," he remarked.

"You educate us better than we educated our parents?" inquired John gravely.

Jimmy considered the question. "One has to give and take in family life," he asserted.

John agreed. After all, it was something to have reached a basis for agreement. It was nearly half-time; each was getting his second wind.

"You 'll find Arthur pretty useful in some things," suggested Jimmy; "he can tell you where to go to for togs and cigarettes and all that. Of course, he 's rather given himself away by getting engaged. I should n't care to have a girl hanging round when I wanted to *do* things."

John frowned. "Why has n't he joined up?" he asked.

Jimmy stiffened. "Excuse me! I fancy that 's *his* affair," he replied. "All the same, it makes it a bit rotten for *me*," he added frankly, "when the fellows ask me what regiment my brother 's in. Olive 's all right; but she just goes her own way and does n't interfere—much. She made a great hit with the men at Harrow, so there must be something *in* her. She is n't my style,

though," he concluded, looking at his watch and mentally calculating whether the interview could now be tactfully concluded.

John tumbled to the situation. "Don't hang about to entertain me, if you 're busy," he protested.

"Well, if you don't mind, I 've promised to run over to Hendon; there 's not much wind, so there may be something doing. Plenty of books if you want to read," he added, in the well-bred Englishman's "Make yourself at home, but don't bother me" manner. "Books are n't much in my line, so I can't vouch for the quality; but there are always the dogs—if you get bored. You 're sure you don't mind my pushing off? I 'm doing a bit of war-work in my spare time—fitting parts to new machines. One likes to know how the old 'bus is made, y' know!"

John rose and held out his hand. "Don't forget! I 'd like to be friends—some day," he said.

"Oh, that 's all right!" replied Jimmy. He shook hands limply. "Very glad if we *can* be—some day. Awfully decent of you to suggest it."

He glanced at the window. "Oh, hang it all! There 's old Seppy! I 'll leave you to entertain him, if you don't mind!" And with that he made a frantic attack on the door, and disappeared behind its protection.

John heaved a sigh of relief. The ice had been

broken; he was certain that he and his school-boy son would be friends. School-boys were remarkably like dogs: with patience you could win their loyalty, and with sympathy their affection. His elder son would be a more difficult problem, but his daughter, he felt, was already a little biased in his favor.

Could he win his wife as easily? John sighed and lighted another cigarette.

When a man starts out to collect victories, he must follow them up; flag-wagging indulged in too previously had led to the recall of many a commander-in-chief.

CHAPTER XI

Conspirator: He loves your wife.
Reformer: He shows good taste.

Pro Patria, Act 3.

COLONEL SEPTIMUS PACKINDER, D.S.O., was born to be a squire of dames; not the recently created kind, but the type that is helpless without a man to put her into taxis, to anticipate her desires, and to attach himself to her parasol, dropped handkerchiefs and gloves. A bachelor of fifty-seven, well valeted, wearing his years lightly, he was a useful person to have about the house. He had retired shortly after the South African War, and for some years had lived a comfortable and not over-exciting life divided between his club, his friends, and the directorships of a few eminently respectable corporations. He had few equals in the art of proposing a vote of thanks to the chairman; he knew what plays were worth going to see, and what books it was desirable to read. He had a luxurious little flat in St. James's Street, belonged to several of the best clubs, and generally enjoyed life. He had always been in love with someone—usually a married

woman, but in a thoroughly harmless fashion. He had known Amelia for about twelve years, had laid his heart and his spare time at her feet, and had no complaints to make with regard to her treatment of him. She was young, she was attractive, she was comparatively wealthy; on an average he had proposed to her three times in every two years, and her regular refusals had only served to stimulate his ardor. When war broke out he joined the noble army of dug-outs, and renewed his youth at the expense of those men of the new army who crossed his path. They were, most of them, men of intelligence and initiative, and Colonel Packinder, known to his friends as "Seppy," distrusted intelligence and snubbed initiative. *"King's Regulations"* had become his Bible, army orders and Army Council instructions limited his horizon. These amateur soldiers with ideas, who laughed at the sacred scroll of red tape, were interfering faddists. Of course, in the early days of the war, until the opposing armies sat down to watch each other from the interminable line of trenches, a certain amount of latitude had been allowed; but after that red tape awoke from its short doze, and octopus-like drew the whole army gradually into its clutches. An officer who did a thing while the Army Council was deciding whether it was possible for him to do it received a severe reprimand. The new army

officer as a rule gave in after a few months, and inhaled red tape systematically, thus hastening his promotion. Others could not be induced to look up to headquarters with sufficient reverence. One officer who was in charge of Indian supplies, when asked by the War Office to explain why he had a surplus of a certain article which, he was informed, was known by two different names, one masculine, one feminine, replied that, being unaware of the sex of the commodities in question, he had inadvertently kept them in the same store, and that the surplus must therefore be due to natural causes. Another young officer, when applying for leave, absently inserted the name of his colonel in the space provided for particulars as to who would answer for him during his absence. It was these little human touches that became a constant source of heart-to-heart discussion in the early days of the war; but they failed to improve the temper of the conservative-minded dug-out.

Seppy, being connected with a well-known ducal family, naturally received a staff appointment, and was sent overseas in the autumn of 1914. He got no nearer to the fighting line than Rouen, but he enjoyed writing to Amelia letters marked "On Active Service," and when he drew the lucky number that gave him a D.S.O. his triumph was complete. When he returned to England, on the recommendation of the commander-in-chief, he re-

ceived an important appointment in the Censorship Department, where he had since remained.

He was a good-humored, fussy, rather old-maidish person, always very pleased with himself and the world in general, inclined to be sentimental, fond of good-fellowship, and quite at home in any company. He was spoken of as "Seppy" even by men who had never met him; he considered it a slight to be called anything else by those who had.

He was very much at home at Chalfont; Amelia encouraged him to come often, and the young people accepted him as a child accepts the presence of the gardener, the chauffeur, and other ignorant grown-ups who are constantly saying "Don't!"

John heard a genial, rather staccato, well-bred voice asking if anyone were at home. "My hated rival," he chuckled.

Seppy came in through the French windows that led into the garden. "Oh, excuse me!" he cried, on catching sight of John. "Is Mrs. Osborne in?"

"She has gone to church," explained John, admiring the cut of Seppy's breeches and wondering whether he should ask for the name of the maker.

"She must have gone across the fields," said Seppy; "I came by the road. Perhaps she will only stay to matins," he added hopefully, throw-

ing himself into an easy chair and loosening his belt. "I shall wait."

He looked round the room. "Where are the young people?" he inquired. "They should n't have left their visitor to amuse himself. I must speak to them about it."

John chuckled. His visitor was obviously a man thoroughly confident regarding his position in the household. Such confidence would eventually have to be destroyed; but self-destruction would, under the circumstances, be more in keeping with the laws of hospitality. He would give Seppy plenty of rope.

"May I offer you a cigarette?" inquired Seppy. "I keep a box or two down here, as a rule. I am a frequent visitor, and am accustomed to making myself at home."

"I gathered that," said John.

Seppy discovered a box of cigarettes hidden underneath the current number of the *Bystander* and offered one to his companion. They lighted their cigarettes from the same match. Seppy had rarely been in greater peril; but John possessed plenty of self-control, and refrained from yielding to a sudden impulse to fall upon his rival, tooth and nail.

Seppy, sublimely unconscious of danger, rambled on, making polite conversation. He was an amazingly adequate purveyor of small-talk,

probably from enjoying so regularly the society of the opposite sex.

From the weather to the war was but a step, and from the war in general to coming eventualities in particular a natural development. Being in the censor's department, Seppy was somewhat of an authority on the plans of the Army Council. He was an inveterate spreader of rumors, and mentioned the possibility of a second occupation of Gallipoli—though he scarcely realized the irony of using the word "occupation." A flea on a dog's back, in momentary danger of being scratched off, might almost as truthfully be chronicled as occupying the dog.

"It must be very wearing to be the recipient of such weighty secrets," said John. "I heard a man on the train say that the General Staff double-locks the doors and stuffs the telephone with cotton-wool, but invariably forgets to burn the contents of the waste-paper basket; which explains the origin of rumors, most of which are based on the charwoman who empties it, and have their refilling-point at the service clubs usually frequented by elderly dug-outs."

"One has heard that the wives of Cabinet Ministers are occasionally indiscreet," replied Seppy meditatively.

Seppy was a victim to that most objectionable of all the lesser vices—curiosity. He was anxious

to place John, to know his position in the world, his status in the household. A remark concerning the charm of the house and garden, and a few words in praise of Amelia and her children, led to further efforts.

"They are old friends of yours, I understand?" suggested Seppy.

"Quite!" replied John, smiling reminiscently.

Seppy was too well-bred to allow his curiosity to get the upper hand; but he was a little puzzled and slightly annoyed by John's unresponsiveness. He glanced at his companion's clothes, and was a trifle shocked to notice how old-fashioned and out of date they were. "You 've been away?" he inquired.

John nodded.

"That accounts for my not having met you before," continued Seppy, rather pleased with his own powers of deduction. "May I inquire your name?"

John conceded the point.

"Glad to meet you, my dear Wynn!" He rose and shook hands. "I am Colonel Packinder," he added.

John, rather to his own annoyance, could not help liking the gallant colonel; there was something delightfully simple and frank in his manner, and in his ready acceptance of John's presence. There was none of that constitutional distrust of

a stranger so frequently apparent even among people who have traveled. If Seppy desired to be something more than a mere friend of the family, such an ambition was natural and even excusable —under the circumstances.

John always saw the other man's point of view before insisting on his own. Such a gift does not usually lead to advancement or speedy success, but it makes a man distinctly easier to live with.

"Did you know the late Mr. Osborne?" inquired Seppy, after a slight pause in the conversation—a conversation that bore more resemblance to a monologue.

"Not at all," replied John. "Who was he?"

Like most men with a keen sense of humor, he was apt to be irritated, even exasperated, by little things; and the idea of Amelia changing her name had stimulated that somewhat inexcusable weakness.

The man who realizes that life is more or less of a grim ironic joke has occasional moments when he wonders why tragedy so often lurks under the skirts of comedy; until he comes to the conclusion that comedy is tragedy without dignity, and tragedy is nothing but comedy taken seriously.

"She very rarely mentions him," continued Seppy reflectively. "I have sometimes wondered

what kind of man he was, and whether Arthur resembles him in any way."

John looked up.

"I should not care to be seen in civilian clothes —at Arthur's age," said Seppy.

John, who was suffering from the same kind of prejudice, turned the conversation. "You must have seen a lot of service?" he suggested, after glancing at the row of ribbons on Seppy's breast.

Seppy had seen the Boer War through at Southampton Docks, and the Sudan Campaign at Cairo. In fact, he could claim to have seen service in seven campaigns without having heard a shot fired. He was one of those soldiers fated to hold the pen rather than the sword. When placed in an office, surrounded by a few clerks, a pile of buff slips, and a bundle of red tape, he was thoroughly at home. On one occasion he had been known to send a neatly pinned file of tradesmen's accounts to his bank in London with the magic words "Passed to you for necessary action, please!" scrawled across it.

The faint hum of an airplane obtruded itself on the summer stillness.

"What the devil 's that?" asked John.

"Only an airplane," replied Seppy, with a puzzled glance at his companion.

"Where? I should like to see it! I 've never

seen one," said John, rising quickly and going to the window.

This was a facer for Seppy. Surely there could scarcely be a man living who had never seen an airplane? Where on earth could the fellow have been these last few years?

He followed John to the window, and out on the terrace. "There it is! Look!" he cried, pointing toward the London haze.

"What a beautiful sight!" cried John in some excitement, as he watched the bird-like machine that was flying from the northeast toward the southwest at the height of a little below ten thousand feet.

"I fancy that fellow 's a German who is going to drop a bomb or two on London," remarked Seppy casually. "Fritz thinks we spend all our week-ends out of town."

John was amazed. Colonel Packinder appeared to take the matter very coolly.

The British people as a nation took the matter fairly coolly. The British newspapers had told the Boche frankly their opinion of his antics in the air, but Jerry was always thick-skinned. Even a leading article in the *Daily Mail,* inspired by Lord Northcliffe himself, had had very little effect. So the British people, having entered a protest in the national organ of opinion, settled down philosophically to its customary routine.

Raids by airplanes, bombs dropped by Zeppelins, bombardments on east-coast towns by the German fleet were unsportsmanlike; but they were merely another proof of Teutonic insensibility to any decent instincts.

There was a report of a distant explosion. The airplane rose hurriedly and flew away towards the southeast.

"I thought so," exclaimed Seppy, unperturbed. "It *was* a Boche. I expect he was trying to hit Queen Charlotte's Hospital. Will you have another cigarette?"

John turned and faced Seppy, his voice quivering with indignation. "Good Lord, sir!" he cried. "They are dropping bombs on London! It's an insult! Why do we allow it?"

"The Boche will always be a bounder," replied Seppy reassuringly.

"How dare he bound in *our* sky?" protested John, with some heat. "Do you think they would give me a commission if I dyed my hair?"

"I'll see what can be done," replied Seppy. "Where have you been and what have you been doing these last few years?"

John was striding furiously up and down the terrace; he was thoroughly roused at last. "Damn their impertinence! Dropping bombs on London!" he muttered. "I feel as though someone had been defiling the tombs of my ancestors!"

Then he apologized for ignoring Seppy's question. "You want to know how I 've spent the last few years? I 've been picking oakum and breaking stones."

Seppy stiffened perceptibly. "Would you mind being a little more definite?" he inquired. He had become in a moment the Colonel of the orderly-room.

"I 've been in prison for the last fifteen years —at Portland," said John. He hated explaining things; he preferred merely to state a fact and to leave it to prove itself. He never offered an excuse or asked for one. Like most imaginative men, he had a profound reverence for facts. Facts, like history, were frequently unreliable, but extremely useful as a basis for argument.

"I don't recommend it as a health resort," continued John with some heat. "But, damn it all! I want to have a shot at those Germans!"

"When did you leave Portland?" inquired Seppy, frowning.

"Yesterday!" John continued his perambulation of the terrace, snapping out his remarks like a machine-gun. "They let me out because I had been sent there in error. They 've apologized— that is to say they 've pardoned me for living at their expense for fifteen years when I had done nothing to deserve it. But, damn it, man! Sup-

pose they hit Westminster Abbey? It 's too near the House of Commons to be safe!"

John did not yet realize that the House of Commons was the last place Brother Boche desired to destroy; in the past it had been his greatest friend, and in the future would probably return to its allegiance.

"Is Mrs. Osborne aware of how you have spent the last fifteen years?" inquired Seppy, on his return to the living-room.

John was exasperated to rudeness. "Of course she is!" he snapped. "She 's my wife!"

Seppy stared; then his assurance crumbled like a house of toy bricks. He sat down, and tried to face his companion without flinching. He had to swallow once or twice before he could articulate distinctly. "Your wife?" he gasped.

John chuckled, then checked and looked at his rival sympathetically. He suddenly realized that Amelia was supposed to be a widow, and that Seppy was probably suffering from a considerable shock—through no fault of his own. If anyone was to blame, it was Amelia; and yet, how could she be blamed for holding her tongue concerning such a vital matter?

"But your name is Wynn and hers is Osborne?" protested Seppy. There was a certain feminine quality in him that refused to accept facts even when they were undeniable: that touch of the

illogical, so charming in a young girl, so irritating in an old woman.

John, against his will, was forced to explain the situation. Seppy was too much of an egotist to realize another man's tragedy. He saw the tangle only from his own point of view, and his mind registered a protest against accepting the situation. He possessed the cardinal virtue of never knowing when he was beaten; it was that curious British quality, possibly due to doggedness, perhaps to egotism, that has made the British nation what it is. Seppy was a philosopher where other people's troubles were concerned; but his present blow had temporarily exposed his reserves of philosophy to the four winds.

The British are a philosophical people; that is to say, they accept a thing provided it is repeated often enough for them to get used to it. But nothing is more irritating to British self-complacence than to find an Englishman behaving or thinking differently from the majority of his kind. John's attitude was beginning to irritate Seppy considerably.

"If *you* ever get sent to prison for life," said John, after concluding his recital of the facts that led to his incarceration, "and they let you out unexpectedly, don't come back to your family! It only upsets their plans and causes a lot of embarrassment."

John gazed out of the window, his thoughts playing havoc with his philosophical attitude. He was suffering from one of his moments of exasperated rebellion against the stupidity of his fellow-creatures and of circumstances. He was thinking of Amelia, and of his children; and he was feeling curiously alone in the world.

Seppy, as usual, was thinking of himself. To squire an attractive woman, to be useful to her, and to give her a great deal of time and attention, is frequently a form of self-indulgence in a certain type of man. To give a great deal, and to ask nothing in return, does not always imply unselfishness; it sometimes means that the desire to consecrate a grand passion is entirely outside a certain individual's limitations, that he is content to fetch and carry, to have a cloak to hold, a hand to kiss; and that he has neither capacity nor ambition for any further proof of devotion. It is another form of egotism—the dislike of the individual for sinking his own individuality in that of another human being.

"I must admit that I resent your coming back and upsetting all our plans!" exclaimed Seppy after a long pause.

John looked at him; he rather admired the man's frankness, though a little shocked by the egotism.

"It is n't cricket!" added Seppy severely.

This was egotism on the grand scale. Seppy had been perfectly contented with things as they were. Amelia had been contented, too—at least, so Seppy fondly believed. She was beginning to grow fond of him; her children had accepted him as a kind of permanent institution. But John's unexpected return had altered the whole aspect of things. It had upset Seppy terribly, and it must have upset Amelia even more. Their scheme of life would have to be reorganized on a new basis. Seppy's point of view was, in his own opinion, that of any reasonable Englishman who disliked having any of his manners and customs interfered with. That his attitude might be considered to be revoltingly selfish never occurred to him—he was so sure of his own importance, so conscious of his own rectitude. They had all grown accustomed to the situation; had accepted it, and were prepared to let it go on indefinitely. That John might not care to have it going on indefinitely was a matter that did not concern Seppy. How could the fellow expect to take things up exactly as he had left them fifteen years before? A lot could happen in fifteen years. People altered, ideas altered, affections altered; one looked at life through different glasses. He, for one, would refuse to be turned out of his comfortable niche in such a charming household.

John had decided that Seppy would have to go;

but, for Amelia's sake, the departure would have to be very carefully arranged. He had no desire to present Seppy with a martyr's crown. Women had an instinctive sympathy for the under dog; and when the animal in question had been extremely useful and amazingly devoted, its exit must not be accompanied by slow music of the pathetic order; for, however much a woman might admire and respect the strong, firm hand of authority in a husband, the good deeds of the lover might be apt to come up for comparison in future conversations. John's idea of allowing Seppy to destroy himself and his own chances, though possibly a longer process, was infinitely more politic. In dealing with a woman, a man must never forget her sex. Seppy's frankness, whether it arose from honesty or from a total disregard of other people's feelings where his own were concerned, could be trusted to assist John's scheme, if given plenty of opportunity to express itself. Seppy would plead for himself—which would annoy Amelia; John would remain neutral —which would stimulate her to force his hand and to make him declare himself. As a nation of individualists, each must play his own hand.

The old religions talked of brotherhood, and exalted the individual. The new religions had been adjusted to pay tribute to the worship of the ego. "Stop! Look! Listen! This means

you! Is your soul paying good interest? If not, let us attend to it (at half our usual rates, by quoting this advertisement!) and we will guarantee heaven, or your money will be returned!" was a type of propaganda that had become extraordinarily popular. Converts were told that a calmly balanced mind was a necessity; but it was impossible to maintain a calmly balanced mind unless one concentrated entirely on one's own desires. "I have only enough for myself," was a popular cry—whether it concerned money, sympathy, or fruit and vegetables for wounded soldiers. Doing good in secret was a rare eccentricity; good deeds were reported in the newspapers—in large type. Advertisement was the order of the day. Even the War Office had to bow to the popular demand, and to concede the gold stripe for wounds, the chevron for service overseas. The women were wonderful, but their penchant for being photographed as Red Cross nurses, smoothing the brows of wounded soldiers, had become almost a disease. Even a walk in Hyde Park had to be chronicled in the simple touching style of the superannuated Duchess, or her maid, who writes the Social Notes in a popular illustrated morning journal—a page known to the army as "Snoblets for Snobs!"

People had begun to advertise at the time when John had been forced to retire from social life;

now everyone advertised. They were beating the drum as hard as they could whack it. Popular actors on home service in London, music-hall managers in staff tabs, music-hall comedians organizing charity performances, bishops and popular novelists visiting the front, politicians advising the nation, war experts forecasting eventualities that failed to materialize—types and persons by the thousand sought publicity, and got it. The whole world appeared to be suffering from a disease that might be called "look-at-me-itis." And "over there" men laughed and fought and died; and on the gray North Sea men kept watch and ward, and felt ashamed of their countrymen. And in the munition factories men and women ruined their health, their hands, their faces, slaving to keep up the supply so that the "boys" should not again complain of having no shells. Indeed, the British nation was a crazy mixture of motives, peoples, and ideals; and the systematic Boche, who tried to classify its citizens, wrapped cold towels round his head and sank exasperated into singing hymns of hate—a thing that immensely tickled the national sense of humor.

We were a democracy; and the more democratic we grew, the more honors and titles we seemed to demand. John had always considered honors and titles to be a cheap form of lagniappe; their cost was trifling compared with the pleasure

given to the recipient. He was as yet unaware of the movement to establish a new order for children under sixteen—to encourage the birth-rate.

John appreciated Seppy's frankness in throwing down the gauntlet, and he was wondering whether Amelia would do the same. Had any member of his family altered his or her custom on account of the return of the nominal head of the household? It was his first morning at home. Where was his wife? She had gone to church. Where was his daughter? She had gone motoring. His sons were following their usual Sunday avocations just as though their father were not there. If he had asked them to stay, to keep him company, would they have stayed? Would they have been irritated at having their routine upset? Did that imply egotism gone to seed? Had people grown into the habit of talking about themselves to the exclusion of every other interest? Would he be forced to join the majority and to talk about himself? For fifteen years he had not had the chance. They had been talking of themselves, and of nothing else, for fifteen years. If he wished to find out the truth about things, and started asking questions, he would probably be considered a nuisance. People who took life seriously were rarely popular, especially those who had the ability to laugh at themselves. People

appeared to do things because they wanted to do them, and most of them were accomplished casuists in justifying their own point of view.

Was he acquiring rather a distorted panorama of humanity in general? Was he seeing a little too clearly? Would plain facts, without any treacle, prove to be caviar to the general? The public had always loved treacle both in its politics and in its amusements; the newspaper that turned off the treacle tap and substituted quinine usually lost a number of its regular subscribers. The writer who mixed no treacle with his ink usually repented of his experiment. The popular man had always been the man who took life as he found it, and questioned nothing. The critic of life and manners is the ghost at the banquet.

He had lived for this home-coming, longed for it, dreamed of it through all those deadly, bitter years of loneliness; and now his mind was perplexed and his ideas were crumbling. Had he already enjoyed the ideal home-coming—in his dreams? and was he now getting the real thing? No; if he believed that he would—well! he would kill Seppy, and get sent back to Portland for good.

He laughed grimly. If he were to kill a staff officer, it would be creating a precedent. He mentioned the idea to Seppy.

"I would tell them you were making love to

my wife. Even the privileges of a staff officer have their limitations."

"I have been making love to your wife for twelve years," replied Seppy. "It has become a habit almost impossible to eradicate."

"Do you usually stay to lunch on Sundays?" inquired John.

"Invariably," replied Seppy.

"Then you must stay to lunch to-day! I'll fight you fairly for my wife's affections, and I shall expect to see quite a lot of you in the future," announced John, whose sense of irony rarely interfered with his sense of hospitality.

There is nothing so disconcerting as the truth in its naked state—so many people wrap it up, or mold it according to their fancies, or use portions of it to camouflage their policies. John, by his use of direct methods, completely upset Seppy's preconceived ideas regarding John's possible behavior. Seppy began to lose his nerve. He fidgeted, hesitated in conversation, and finally beat a retreat, excusing himself on the grounds of meeting Amelia and escorting her home from church.

John laughed; it was one up to him in the great game. He would give them every opportunity, while he himself would remain in the background. He would never play the jealous husband; the part was scarcely in his line. Jealous husbands

invariably made fools of themselves. He recalled an anecdote told him by a traveling American on a Channel crossing—a long, lean, solemn-faced Westerner with a monotonously droning voice, who never once smiled or stopped chewing his cigar.

"Talking of jealousy," began his companion (they had not been talking of jealousy, as it happened, but your consistent story-teller is never at a loss for an opening), "talking of jealousy, did you ever hear of a guy called Tooley Mond? No? Well, I 'm telling you. There was a feller named Stockey, Ezra H. Stockey, of Smithville, Arizona. He struck it rich, sudden-like, and married. The dollars started pouring in, and Mrs. Stockey had ambitions. Ezra had n't received any education to write home about, but Mrs. Stockey read the society pages of the Sunday supplement and courted a palace on Fifth Avenoo. Well, sir! Stockey grew so rich he could n't count how much he had, and Mrs. Stockey was a darned pretty woman, and knew it, and wanted other folks to know it. So she hitched up the team and make tracks for N'york. Ezra followed a few months later, and found the madam ensconced in a hundred-dollar-a-day suite at the Waldorf-Astoria, going some in the entertaining line. She and Ezra had never had no words, barring an argument as to whether the first child should be

called Theodore or William Jennings; but they compromised by calling it Muriel. Muriel had a French bong and a whole suite to herself. Mrs. Ezra was out for booty, and she raked in one or two ginks who 'd hit the hard-up trail and a British Bart. Yes, sir! The sort of guy that added 'Bart' after his name in the register as you or I 'd say John Smith, Keokuk. Anyway, Bart seemed to be some city, for he 'd the run of Fifth Avenoo, and introduced Mrs. Ezra to heaps of his friends. Ezra bought himself a tail coat and a boiled shirt and the kind of hat that says 'Cuckoo!' after you 've sat on it, and went into society. Yes, sir-ee! He went into society for one night only. Next morning he gave his glad rags to the waiter, and told Mrs. Ezra she could please herself but had better count him out; he 'd stood by the cloak-room all the evening, wonderin' when it would be time to go home, and his collar hurt him mighty bad, and all the guys who left their coats tipped him half a dollar, and he did n't know why, and the genu-wine cloak-room page got mad and wanted to fight him, and the only drink he got was served in a glass the size of a pigeon's egg, and when he asked for a tumblerful the waiter looked as if he were goin' to faint; so Ezra hit the *Rathskellar* trail nights and Mrs. Ezra enjoyed herself. And everything was lovely. Every morning Ezra asked her was

it lots of fun and who was there? (His visit was timed after she 'd interviewed her secretary, her manicurist, the head waiter, and the French bong. She always spoke French to the bong.) 'Tooley Mond,' said Mrs. Ezra. 'That's all right,' said Ezra. Go on havin' a good time.'

"But Ezra began to grow pale and sort o' thinner. He 'd sit in a corner of the smoking-room just starin' at the tellesated pavement—*you* know, all patterns, trippy sort o' patterns—and chewin' on his cigar and lokin' savage. Fellers asked him what was wrong? He just looked at 'em, and they steered for the bar, watchin' his hip pocket. Mrs. Ezra was puzzled, but she did n't stay home and nurse him. One mornin' she told him she was goin' over to Long Island for a week's-end visit. Ezra hit the cuspidor at five yards, and inquired: 'Will Tooley Mond be there?' 'Of course—*slava sondere,*' some dago expression she used. Ezra found out whose house it was, and told her good-by. He looked up the ad-dress in the telephone guide, bought a dandy automatic and plenty cartridges, hired an automobile, and took several drinks. He left the Waldorf by the 33d Street entrance at 10 p.m., crossed over by the ferry, and beat it over to somewhere in the direction of Oyster Bay.

"He found the house with a half-mile drive from the gate to the door, gave a bit of lagniappe

to locate his wife's room, and at 2 a.m., when all was as quiet as a Boston culture club, he shinned up the porch pillars and got on to the upper gallery. He opened the window of his wife's bedroom very quietly, hitched himself inside, closed it, and turned on the lights. She woke up and let out a yell. 'Forget it!' said Ezra. 'Where 's Tooley Mond?' 'Where 's who?' asked Mrs. Ezra. 'Tooley Mond!' replied Ezra, searchin' the room and under the bed, his automatic ready to his hand. 'Are you mad?' asked Mrs. Ezra. 'I want to tell you that this same Tooley Mond has got my goat. He makes me tired, and I 'm going to blow his head off! Wherever you go, he goes! Wherever you are, he is! And you accept his presence as a matter of course. Every time I 've gone to your room and asked you who was there, did you hand me a list of guests? Why, no! There was just one man there that mattered—Tooley Mond. You never gave a thought to no one else. Tooley Mond filled the bill. I was just your husband—a darned son-of-a-gun that 'd got rich quick and would n't wear no stick-up collars. Our little Muriel was left to that French bong whose vocabulary may be distinguished, but she never says nothing to me but 'Oh, Mossoo!' And now you 've come here to spend this week's-end, and Tooley Mond's here too, and I 'm goin' to slap

his face good and hard and drill holes in his shirt-front, so hand him out pronto!' He gave a glance at Mrs. Ezra, who was having hysted-derricks on the bed. 'I won't hurt *you*,' he said; 'but Tooley Mond 's as good as buried.' 'Sit down,' said Mrs. Ezra; 'sit down and kiss me, you darned old galoot'—or whatever terms of endearment a woman uses to her husband. Not bein' married, I can't give 'em exact. 'Listen to me,' she says. 'Jooley, the French bong,' she says, 'has been learnin' me French,' she says; 'and when you asked me who was at the party, I said, *"Toute le monde."* 'I know it,' said Ezra; 'but his party days are over. Tooley Mond had better get busy writin' R.I.P. after his name.' 'Why, you gol-darned old sheesicks,' said Mrs. Ezra, or words to that effect, 'don't you know what *tout le monde* means? It 's French for everybody. When I said *tout le monde* would be there, I meant everybody would be there—that is, everybody who was anybody.' 'Do you mean there ain't no such guy as Tooley Mond?' asked Ezra, a bit fazed. 'Of course there is n't! Run home, dearie, and learn French,' says Mrs. Ezra; ' I want my beauty sleep.'

"So Ezra beat it back to N'york at a hundred miles per, and laughed fit to bust. He woke up a waiter and made him dig out a magnum of fizzy stuff. It cured Ezra of jealousy, and it cured

Mrs. Ezra of speakin' French; but it only shows you how easy it is to suspect a woman of handin' you the mitt, and when I read of a guy gettin' jealous of his wife I always think of Ezra and Tooley Mond."

CHAPTER XII

Reformer: My son! Please yourself!
Son: It is my religion.
Reformer: Then ask of me no contribution to the Cause.
Pro Patria, Act 1.

JOHN strolled about the room, examining the books and china. Then his eyes rested on the pianola. He looked at it, a little puzzled; he examined it, still more puzzled; he took up a music roll, tried to read it, could make neither head nor tail of it, so replaced it and rang the bell. Parsons appeared. "Yes, sir?" she inquired.

"Can you tell me what this thing is?" asked John.

Parsons explained. "How very fascinating!" said John. "Can you work it?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" replied Parsons. "Cook and I often has harmonious evenings—when the family 's out. Oh!" she pulled herself up and glanced at John deprecatingly.

"That 's all right, Parsons! Show me how you do it," said John.

"But it 's Sunday," protested the parlor-maid.

"Is n't one supposed to enjoy music on Sunday?" he inquired.

"Madame has no objection, sir," replied Parsons; "but cook has prejudices."

"It 's a bad thing to have prejudices. Cook should try to conquer them," said John. "Please sit down and play this," he added, handing her a roll marked "Cavalleria Rusticana."

"I call it 'Rustic Cavalry.' Does it mean the yeomanry, sir?" inquired Parsons, seating herself at the pianola and adjusting the levers.

"Not altogether," replied John. "Go ahead!"

Parsons pedaled conscientiously, and John stood watching her, fascinated.

Unfortunately, Arthur and Chloe chose that moment to arrive. They entered the room, and stopped aghast at the sight. Chloe gurgled with suppressed laughter, but Arthur was genuinely horrified. Arthur was always afraid of what people would think, having acquired such middle-class prejudices at Harrow and Cambridge.

Chloe was about twenty, very attractive and pretty, very assured in manner, with a high, clear voice. She rarely hesitated in her speech, and was very direct in what she said. She had made some enemies by her frankness. People, as a rule, listened to her, not on account of what she said but of how she said it, and because her voice was as clear as a bell and had great carrying power. She was delightfully lacking in self-consciousness, but she suffered from occasional

fits of introspection—though, indeed, she possessed the virtue of accepting things as they were to quite a remarkable degree.

"Father!" protested Arthur in a horrified voice.

"Hallo, Arthur!" said John, turning to greet him.

Arthur went over to the pianolo. "Parsons! How dare you? Stop at once!"

Parsons silenced the instrument and rose respectfully. "I beg your pardon, sir! This—this gentleman—"

"That will do, Parsons," said Arthur irritably.

Parsons, unperturbed, left the room. "Really, father! What will cook say?" protested Arthur.

John laughed. "What *will* she say? And why should you worry?" he inquired.

Arthur looked perplexed. "She 's a good cook; they are so rare," he explained.

"Do you mean good *cooks* are rare, or *good* cooks? I prefer the former," said John. "Is this Chloe?" he asked, turning to her with a welcoming smile.

"How do you do?" said Chloe, shaking hands. "I think it was awfully sporting having Parsons in to play to you. She has quite a *touch.*"

"Father! I have told Chloe everything," explained Arthur.

John turned to her. "Well?" he inquired.

"He has been as serious as a Cabinet Minister

out of a job. I could n't think what it was he had to confess," said Chloe; "unless it meant that he had a past and had suddenly grown conscientious. I think it 's horribly hard lines on *you*," she added sympathetically. "I hope someone will ask a question about it in the House: it might lead to something."

John chuckled. Chloe was evidently an optimist. But he liked the modern way of taking everything for granted, it saved a great deal of unnecessary explanation. Chloe hated explanations. When a girl possessed parents who invariably disagreed on every point, on principle, she soon discovered that principles were provocative of unprincipled behavior, and that it was wiser to eliminate them. Arthur had failed to acquire her philosophy; as a budding diplomat, he had cultivated a habit of making phrases that by no possibility could be construed into meaning anything, and on that account would before long reap his reward in the form of an under-secretaryship.

"Have you told Lord Gratham?" asked John.

"I told him you had come home unexpectedly," replied Arthur.

Lord Gratham was a very unimaginative man; his distrust of the abnormal amounted to a disease, and his first move had been to order Chloe to break off her engagement. "We are not

in the nineteenth century," Chloe had protested —which annoyed him still more; for he himself belonged to the nineteenth century and hated to be reminded of the fact that we had grown out of it.

"How does the matter rest?" inquired John.

"It does n't rest," replied Chloe; "it pops up every few minutes, rendering the atmosphere distinctly stormy."

Lord Gratham had refused to listen to explanations; he always hated details; he could not help thinking that having a father when you don't expect one was more provocative of scandal than not having a father at all. "He has gone to church—to think the matter over," said Chloe. "At least, that 's what he *says*. He has really gone to get away from mother. You see, mother, when she saw that father was in opposition, naturally took my side. She certainly drew his fire a bit, and gave me time to collect some arguments."

"Suppose he persists in his opposition?" suggested John.

"We 're perfectly willing to admit his point of view, but not his right to interfere with ours," replied Chloe.

John pondered the question. No man was capable of an unbiased judgment after forty. Children appeared to consult their parents as a

matter of courtesy, without prejudice to any decision they might take; they had to discover life for themselves. The younger generation had traveled far in the last fifteen years; they had had a long way to go, having been sidetracked for so many thousand years. Really, it was a very interesting world to come back to—a deliciously ironical world! How could a man help enjoying these intimate glimpses into the points of view of the people with whom he came in contact? Everyone semed so thoroughly satisfied with his own ethics. In John's young days they had had DOUBTS—with a big D—on almost every subject —including religion. Now all doubts seemed to have been solved, and the only *really* important thing appeared to be to get what you could and to give only what you must. Not that the world was selfish: it was merely self-assured.

Naturally, young people did not take much stock in the older generation. Why should they? When the war started, it had been the older men who had waved flags and shouted and talked of Christmas in Berlin. (Some of them had spent more than one Christmas, not actually in Berlin, but just outside—poor devils!) The younger men went because they had to; they realized that their fathers had made such a muddle of everything that the younger men were in honor bound to try and straighten things out. They had had

no illusions about it. The older generation had called the youngsters pessimists because they, when asked if the war would be over by Christmas, had replied, "Which Christmas?" The younger generation might be very objectionable in some ways, but it could not be fooled as *his* generation had been fooled by their parents.

Of course, there were slackers in both parties; his son appeared to be one of them. The older men were patriotic, but not too efficient; they *must* be inefficient or there would not be so many youthful "indispensables." It was a terrible thing for the country that the older men had to go to the trenches—for which they were physically unfitted—in order to keep the brains of the nation at home. England's treatment of brains had always been a puzzle to foreigners. It was very noble of Arthur, super-patriotic, in fact, to sacrifice his own feelings for the sake of his country's future. How he must hate being a civilian when all decent men were in khaki! But, the older generation having made a mess of things, certain representatives of the younger generation evidently considered it their duty to stay at home and put them right. Perhaps they had concluded that, the more elderly men who were killed, the more hope there would be for the future of the world. There was something in that, no doubt! Age was the brake on the wheel of progress. But

they would have to scrap the Eton and Oxford tradition if the younger generation's sacrifice was to bear useful fruit. The prize product of Eton and Oxford, that academic curse of the nineteenth century, rarely grew up. The young man who mattered nowadays usually came from a mean street, and pounded his way to Parliament by doing without all the jolly things he would like to enjoy. And yet, thought John, he was conventional enough to believe that the wisest thing a young man could do for his country would be to fight his country's enemies, and to leave the future on the knees of the gods. After all, England had managed to get along very well for a good many centuries without paying much attention to brains or encouraging intellect. Her worship of money and established position had made her the greatest nation in the world. Why should she change her views?

"You have n't asked me for *my* point of view," said John.

"Yours?" echoed Arthur, greatly puzzled. "I fail to see how it concerns *you,* sir?"

"I should like to know why you remain at the Foreign Office instead of getting into khaki?" inquired John.

"What on earth has that to do with our engagement?" was Arthur's perplexed reply.

John was unable to withold an exclamation of

annoyance. "Don't you feel ashamed?" he asked.

"Arthur has had more white feathers presented to him than any other man at the F.O.," announced Chloe.

"Is n't there *one* member of my family fighting?" inquired John irritably. It was Arthur's manner more than the subject they were discussing that had got on his father's nerves.

"Francis and Ronald, my cousins, are both certified as indispensable at the Ministry of Munitions," replied Arthur.

"Indispensable—at five-and-twenty!" commented John ironically.

"Why should n't a man be as indispensable at twenty-five as he is at fifty?" inquired Arthur.

It was true that at twenty-five a man was learning, and at fifty he was teaching; and that the man who taught had reached his limitations, while the man who was learning had still his to find. Perhaps the younger men *were* of more importance to the country than their fathers could ever be!

"I always think it 's such a mistake to argue," said Chloe. "Doing a thing is much more convincing than talking about it."

"I don't intend to argue," replied John. "I am that pathetic figure, the man with advanced views who suddenly finds himself on the side of the

reactionaries. I am not going to argue; I am going to dictate." Arthur looked up questioningly. "If Arthur has a conscientious objection to fighting—"

"I have n't," said Arthur, flushing a little. Realizing that his cheeks were warm, he became irritable. "I merely have a conscientious objection to leaving the Foreign Office." At the mention of the Foreign Office his assurance returned.

"I admit your right to it," replied John amiably. "But, at the same time, you 'll admit *my* right to my *own* conscientious objections?"

Arthur hesitated. It would depend upon what they were.

"I have a strong conscientious objection to seeing you in a top-hat instead of a service-cap," said John; "and I can't help my conscience objecting any more than *you* can."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Chloe. "I *did* think you 'd be reasonable!"

"I can't be reasonable," replied John, "when I hear my son talking academic platitudes and sheltering himself in what the newspapers call a funk-hole. The only argument left for me is to cut off supplies."

"Father is very argumentative, too," said Chloe. "But he 's quite an old dear in his way. Mother does n't *say* much, but she 's far more difficult to convince. She indulges in the old-

fashioned kind of repartee—tears! When she cries, I feel twice her age. But she *will* do it; it 's a regular tonic for her."

"My point is that you can't get new ideas from middle-aged men," said Arthur, getting bored by the discussion.

"A man's opinions are worthless until he has lived long enough to see the other fellow's point of view," replied John. "Get into khaki, and I 'll listen to yours."

Arthur looked at Chloe. What were they to do? They could not possibly marry on his pay; it was scarcely sufficient for Chloe's dress-expenses. And he would have to go to a cheap tailor; there would be no more Turkish cigarettes, no more taxis. Why, you couldn't lunch at a restaurant under a sovereign—not if it was a decent restaurant. Besides, they both hated doing things on the cheap. He had always been encouraged to anticipate an increased allowance when he married. Without an allowance marriage was impossible.

He considered the question of how he could wrangle an allowance without concealing any of his principles.

"Are you going to ruin our lives for a scruple?" inquired Chloe reproachfully.

"It 's a conscientious scruple," replied John.

"Your flippancy, sir, is not in particularly good taste," said Arthur stiffly.

"I shall call on Lord Gratham to-morrow to hear his views," John announced.

"Father has n't any views," said Chloe; "he merely has acquired prejudices."

"At any rate, we can exchange prejudices," replied John genially.

Chloe sighed. She would have liked Arthur to join up; but was a girl justified in persuading a man to be false to his system of ethics?

"My dear!" said John. "When my wife was your age she did n't know what ethics were. She probably thought they were a disease."

"Perhaps they are," replied Chloe; "at any rate, when people insist on talking about them."

"Arthur has all the makings of an academic snob," said John.

"Yes; but he 's awfully decent," commented Chloe.

"It 's fastidiousness more than ethics that keeps people decent," remarked John reminiscently.

"We should get on awfully well if we had enough money to do things properly," argued Chloe.

John smiled. Love in a cottage was a privilege reserved for the few who had intelligence enough not to be afraid. Cautious, unimaginative people liked to have everything cut and dried, and suf-

ficient money assured; it destroyed all romance, but it saved them a lot of bother.

Arthur had an inspiration. "You would n't object so much if one of us joined up?" he asked.

John loked at him questioningly. "I think I have found a way out of the difficulty," said Arthur.

CHAPTER XIII

Reformer: You made a terrible mistake!
King: I never admit mistakes. I dare n't. It would upset the constitution.

Pro Patria, Act I.

LORD GRATHAM had an authoritative manner—except in the presenec of his wife. It was a useful possession. Most people are inclined to accept people at their own valuation; but a portentous frown, a pair of keen eyes, and an obstinate mouth will give a man an established position among his friends and acquaintances—provided he has the gift of silence. Life is a long game of bluff, and the man who can bluff most convincingly has the reward of his skill. How many of our friends have any discrimination with regard to people or things? Lord Gratham had bluffed his way through a distinguished career on one asset—a talent for looking wiser than he really was. When he failed to understand a point, he looked very subtle and said: "Ah!" very meaningly. It was a trick he had acquired quite unconsciously, but it had served its purpose by bringing him fame, rewards, and riches. Now, in the autumn of his days, he was a distinguished

ornament of the House of Lords. Accustomed to public speaking, his diction was clear and unforced; he had dignity, and a dislike of contradiction. He was obstinate, prejudiced, uneasy to move; and he possessed a school-boy sense of humor which had earned him a reputation among the minor journalists for being a wit. He had lost his only son in 1914—at Landrecies.

Lady Gratham was small, fragile, and even more obstinate than her husband, easy-going when she had her own way, tearful when thwarted. A charming hostess, and a conscientious wife and mother, without any deep feeling, fairly satisfied with the treatment life had given her, but given to grumbling at things in the genuine English fashion, she treated her husband rather like a school-boy, and her daughter as an unknown quantity of which she was a trifle scared. Life had raced a trifle too far ahead of Lady Gratham, and she could neither forgive nor forget the fact. But her rose-garden was celebrated, and her herbaceous borders well cared for.

"Why, father, I thought you had gone to church," cried Chloe, as Parsons entered suddenly, announcing Lord and Lady Gratham.

"Your mother suggested coming here instead," replied her father grimly. "So—well, here we are!"

John was presented.

"It always seems to me that it 's wiser to know what you are worrying about," sighed Lady Gratham, selecting by instinct the most suitable chair, and removing her motor-veil.

"Now that you know me, I hope you won't worry too much," said John.

The conversation was a little slow at the start; it failed to get into its stride. Arthur was pondering the situation; Chloe was wondering how much it cost to make your own clothes and where you learn the art; Lord Gratham was waiting for someone else to take the offensive; and Lady Gratham was unconsciously awaiting an opportunity for one of those sudden but brilliant illustrations of the art of tactlessness of which she was a past-mistress. John, on the other hand, was wondering where he had seen Lord Gratham before. The face was familiar the eyes, the frown, the massive solemnity, the comedian's pucker, the augmented twinkle, the self-satisfied chuckle of the successful public jester: it was all curiously memory-haunting.

Lord Gratham looked at John. Damn it! the fellow's face was familiar in some way. He had a good memory for faces, as a rule. He had been one of the perpetrators of that terrible old chestnut, "I don't know your face, but your manner is familiar!"

"What 's all this about your son wanting to con-

fess something?" he asked testily. "What the devil did he want to confess?"

Arthur had certainly mumbled something, had wanted to tell him some infernal long rigmarole, Lord knows what it was about! If he had anything to say, why didn't he say it to Lady Gratham? She liked hearings things—all women did.

"He wanted to confess that he had a father," replied John amiably.

"Quite! Quite!" grunted Lord Gratham. "Damn it! I knew he had a father! It 's one of those things no fellow can do without!" he added, chuckling to himself and instinctively glancing round the room to observe if this *bon mot* had been faithfully reported. "I must admit, however, that it was something of a surprise to hear that you were alive. Not that I blame you for that," he added reassuringly.

For what John had received he was truly thankful.

"But I had always understood that Mrs. Osborne was a widow," continued Lord Gratham. Once an idea had penetrated his brain it could not be dislodged by dynamite.

"She very nearly was," replied John. "And, by the way, my name is n't Osborne."

"Why not?" inquired Lord Gratham irritably.

"Your wife is Mrs. Osborne; it 's only logical that you should be *Mr.* Osborne."

This almost uncanny power of reasoning had made Lord Gratham what he was.

"I presume, sir, you had some very good reason for changing your name?" Lord Gratham frowned ominously.

John explained that his wife had changed it in order to enjoy the benefit of a legacy—at the donor's request.

"Lots of people change their names. Damme! I 've done it myself," said Lord Gratham, thawing in true Anglo-Saxon fashion at the mention of a legacy.

Napoleon had once said that we were a nation of shopkeepers; he might with more truth have called us a nation of bookmakers. Our reputation is more sporting than commercial.

John looked up, puzzled. "You?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Lord Gratham, with a humorous twinkle that was one of his specialties. "Before I was elevated to the peerage I was a judge."

It was John's turn to chuckle. Here was a situation sufficiently ironical to arouse the laughter of Olympus! "You were Mr. Justice Winton?" Lord Gratham nodded. "I knew we had met before," said John.

Lord Gratham looked at him inquiringly.

When, how, and where had they met before? he wondered.

"Fifteen years ago—under somewhat embarrassing circumstances," replied John reminiscently. "I remember I disliked you intensely," he added politely.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the ex-judge, a little startled. "Why?"

John smiled. "Well, for one thing, you sentenced me to be hanged," he said in a tone of mild reproach that was a masterpiece of delicate inflection.

Lord Gratham's jaw fell perceptibly. He gasped.

"He was always doing things like that; he had surprisingly little tact, for a judge," complained Lady Gratham, with a sigh.

Chloe was staring aghast, Arthur was frowning in dismay, Lord Gratham looked as though he were going to have a fit. But Lady Gratham took everything for granted; she knew her husband.

"Don't worry!" said John soothingly. "I was n't hanged! The popular press intervened. The popular press was n't satisfied with your conduct of the case, and, to be perfectly frank, neither was I. The popular press said you were biased."

"I deny that!" protested Lord Gratham warmly.

"I thought you were a little biased myself; but I was scarcely in a position to give an impartial opinion," continued John. "At any rate, the popular press succeeded in getting my sentence changed to one of penal servitude for life."

Lord Gratham gasped. In that case, what was the fellow doing here? Had he escaped? And how did he get those clothes? Had he come back for the purpose of—what was it—"doing in" the judge who had sentenced him? One had heard of such things. No; impossible! He was a gentleman. "Damn it, man! What 's your name?" inquired Lord Gratham. John told him.

Gratham tried to avoid his wife's gaze. He and she had discussed the case—ever since his friend the Home Secretary had mentioned the fact that Wynn was to be released. Lady Gratham had reopened the wound in his professional self-esteem on every possible occasion the last few days. Some women were like that. But he denied that his conduct of the case had been biased; he had believed Wynn guilty all the time, and, once he had achieved an original opinion, nothing could disturb it. Of course, justice was not infallible, but it should be; he had done his best to make it so. There might have been mistakes, but he was only human. In court, he had represented the majesty of the law, with all the dislike of criticism natural to an absolute monarch. What

chance had twelve good men and true of the lower middle class to formulate an opinion of their own —even if they had been capable of such an unusual mental effort—when the judge, in his impressively theatrical wardrobe, was there to overawe them, to bully them, to frown at them, and to tell them what they were to think and what they were to do? The judge had the power to commit people for contempt of court; but the people had no power to commit the judge for contempt of the constitution. Trial by jury was an ironical farce; a clever counsel and a prejudiced judge could do what they pleased with the average jury. Wynn's trial and conviction had been a case in point.

The supreme irony lay in the fact that Gratham having admitted his error, a matter of a minute, could claim, in the interests of good form, immunity from further censure; and that John, who had had to pay for this judicial error, which it had taken the law fifteen years to discover, must, also in the interests of good form, treat the whole occurrence as a matter of no consequence.

Every night for fifteen years John had turned restlessly on his plank bed, wide-eyed, sleepless, thinking of the things he would like to say to the judge who had sentenced him: points that the judge had overlooked, evidence he had refused to accept, objections he had allowed that should have been overruled. The speeches John had com-

posed, and forgotten, would have blistered Lord Gratham's self-complacence and scorched that gentleman's soul. At any rate, John had thought so at the time. He had longed for an opportunity to confront his judge and to overwhelm him with reproaches, with bitter words and biting phrases, phrases that would linger, words that would sting. Instead of which, here he was calmly hobnobbing with Lord Gratham in his own house, discussing the question of his son's marriage to Lord Gratham's daughter.

Arthur turned to his prospective father-in-law. "Naturally, sir, I did n't know that you were the judge who sentenced my father."

Lord Gratham's face puckered; he looked more like a comedian than ever. Had he been labeled comic, the public would have laughed at him; but they had merely laughed at his jokes—on the advice of the press.

"Hang it, Arthur!" protested Gratham. "How can Chloe marry you—under the circumstances?"

"Exactly!" agreed John. "But I think the objection should come from *me*. Not that I have any particular objection—on account of what happened fifteen years ago," he added courteously. "Of course, if the sentence had been carried out, it might have produced a certain amount of ill feeling; it might even have been used as a cause for quarreling—toward the end of the honey-

moon. As it is—" He hesitated, feeling for a satisfactory phrase.

"Confound it, man! It 's worse," cried the worried ex-judge.

"You could scarcely expect me to agree with you," replied John, with mild sarcasm.

Lord Gratham frowned. Wynn was a very notorious person; that is to say, he *would* be. The *Daily Telegraph* would probably indulge in its penchant for shilling subscriptions in order to present him with a public testimonial for all he had undergone in error. Gratham himself would be severely criticized—which would be harmful for the etiquette of the profession; and the law, like its equally well-protected sister, the medical profession, was largely a matter of etiquette. The whole case would be resurrected. Gratham himself would not come out of it with the éclat so necessary to the dignity of a member of the Upper House. The *Daily Mail* would probably have an article on elderly judges. He remembered that newspaper's crusade against the appointment of a Foreign Secretary some six months before; it had added the adjective "old" to every mention of the candidate's name. Lord Gratham denied that he was prejudiced, but, as far as he was concerned, the matter must be considered closed.

"You did n't get sent to Portland," protested John; "you merely went to the House of Lords.

They sent *me* to break stones; they sent *you* to break the somnolent calm of a picturesque but futile anachronism."

"I deny that," cried Gratham, with some heat. "The House of Lords is as modern as the other place."

John smiled. The House of Lords had always reminded him of a cathedral, built for the worship of success.

"I admit that the first time I wore my coronet and robes I felt an ass," admitted Lord Gratham, with a twinkle. "I suppose every peer does—unless he is so constituted that he considers the hereditary principle to be of divine origin. But, looked at from a purely utilitarian point of view, a peer's robes are an excellent specific for keeping out the draught."

"My objections to the marriage are insuperable," said John; "but I 'm hanged if I can see any reason for yours."

Gratham protested. He failed to see on what grounds John based his objection. Gratham's own objection was indubitably logical. His prospective son-in-law's father had been a convict—the victim of a judicial error of judgment, certainly; but no amount of innocence could eradicate the marks of the chains.

"Then what the devil is the use, my dear Gratham, of sending poor brutes to prison for ten or

fifteen years, and then letting them out—if the brand is always to be on their cheeks?" asked John grimly. "You had better hang them for every offense and have done with it."

Gratham grunted. Theories were all very well until they touched your own household—when ethics had to be subordinated to prejudice. Not that he himself was prejudiced—he denied being prejudiced; but there were limits to his breadth of mind.

John, on the other hand, failed to see why Lord Gratham should make him responsible for his son's disappointed hopes and expectations. After all, Arthur was in the Foreign Office, and nothing could disturb the poise of a permanent official in the civil service.

"It would never cease to be embarrassing," continued Gratham. "Suppose their children were to say to you: 'Grandpa, what did *you* do in the Great War?' . . . You could n't very well tell them that you spent the first three years of it in prison, owing to my misdirection of the jury. No, my dear fellow! It 's the little things that make or mar the comforts of life."

John smiled. "You may object to your daughter entering my son's family," he said; "but I object still more to my son entering *your* family."

Arthur protested.

"My dear man, you are allowing yourself to be

carried away by prejudice," said Gratham judicially.

"Do you realize that if my son married your daughter, the newspapers would label us as actors in a romantic episode, and that our portraits would appear on page eight—with inset of either Portland Prison or the Old Bailey?" inquired John.

Gratham snorted. He disliked sarcasm in anyone but himself.

"But my objection to the marriage has a still stronger basis," continued John. "I object to it on the grounds of heredity."

"I don't follow you," said Lord Gratham stiffly. Heredity was the corner-stone of the British constitution, and Gratham was a Tory both by instinct and prejudice.

"Apart from the fact that no man is fit to be a judge under thirty or over sixty—"

"I deny that," interrupted Lord Gratham.

John explained. "Under thirty a man has n't acquired a sense of morality; over sixty he has lost it."

"What about women?" inquired Lord Gratham, with a snort.

"Oh, women never had any," replied John amiably. "No really nice women have any morals; they merely have a sense of decency, and they are innately loyal to the prejudices of society as it is

constituted. But, to return to my point—which is not that a judge of over sixty will hurry through a case for fear of missing an appointment to play golf—"

"I deny that," protested Gratham, mechanically but without conviction.

"My point is that I, as the presumed criminal, however unpleasant my position was, should certainly have been the star of the occasion. But I was n't," said John reproachfully, his mind working back to that centuries-long day in the stuffy court, all the windows of which were discreetly closed by order of the judge, where he stood grimly watching the Attorney-General who had led for the crown, and the wholly incapable junior counsel who had defended him (he admitted the junior's difficulties in the absence of the K.C. who had been retained for the defense), trying to score off each other like a pair of star comic actors in a musical comedy. He himself had been merely the author of the play; his fate was a minor incident. But, though barristers will be barristers, the learned judge was not put there to make jokes.

"You, Lord Gratham," cried John indignantly, "encouraged by a stupid press and a servile set of court officials, took every possible opportunity to raise a laugh. Your jokes—jokes that should have been decently interred ages ago—were not only out of place, but, considering that a man's life

was hanging in the balance, distinctly in bad taste. When anyone else endeavored to be funny, you threatened to clear the court; but at your own silly jokelets you chuckled with the greatest appreciation. I was on trial for my life; but you turned my trial into a farce—with only one star in it—yourself! And I confess," he concluded, with gentle irony, "I confess I am fearful of the results of heredity peeping out in any offspring that might bless the union of my son to your daughter."

Chloe, who was glancing at *Blackwood's Magazine,* looked up and frowned, a little perplexed; Arthur squirmed. Lady Gratham concealed a yawn and wondered whether they would be late for lunch.

Lord Gratham stiffened. He denied that his jokes ever offended good taste. It was true that he had never been compelled to listen to them while wondering what his fate was going to be. But his jokes had always been of the healthy, obvious, elemental kind. "I am bringing out a volume of my most priceless jokes," he had confessed to a friend. "Good heavens! Surely they are all in *Punch,*" replied his friend. They had parted on unfriendly terms.

Lord Gratham's taste in literature was simple. It embraced books of humor like *"Three Men in a Boat"* and sentiment of the treacly order that had

so appealed to public opinion in *"The First Hundred Thousand,"* where kind hearts paid such respect to coronets that the lion lay down with the lamb—only one was a little doubtful whether it was the lion or the lamb that wore kilts. *Punch,* too, invariably gave him pleasure—though he never ceased to protest against the mingling of its contents with the advertising matter. Irony he did not understand, subtlety bored him, and he cordially disliked truth in art. Like so many of his class, he left his brains in the cloak-room when visiting the theater, and put them in his spectacle-case when reading a book. He liked a hero to be a hero, and a villain stuffed with machinations. Modern literature did not appeal to him. He considered John Galsworthy's *"Country House"* prejudiced, and Wells "one of those damned democrats."

The press had started booming him as a great humorist, and he had been obliged to live up to his reputation; but for the last fifteen years he had joked with difficulty. Having been labeled a wit, the public concluded that even his cough was full of subtle humor. His famous question: "Who is Lloyd-George?" was still quoted as a priceless specimen of a judicial joke. He was the unfortunate victim of the British craze for labels.

CHAPTER XIV

King: You shall have my crown—as compensation.
Reformer: I have suffered enough already.
Pro Patria, Act 1.

WHEN a public character has to be funny on principle, in order to live up to his reputation, he deserves some pity. A philosopher might ask whether it would not be wiser either to have no principles or to be entirely lacking in reputation. Many people are celebrated for something they do not possess, while their chief assets are studiously ignored. Life is supremely ironical at times.

After all, a judge is little more than a glorified umpire: the white coat becomes the ermine cloak, and the billycock hat is exchanged for the judicial wig.

It is the gambling fever in Great Britain as a nation that makes trial by jury so thrilling. The accused is a mere cipher, and the judge is there to decide which of the opposing barristers is the cleverest. The inherent love of justice in the British people is an excellent subject for leading articles in the newspapers; for the journalist, like the politician, can succeed only by flattering his supporters. John Bull can lap up flattery by the

gallon; but tell him the truth about himself and he refuses to pay. British justice is very like British sport; the public cheers the winner, but has a sentimental sympathy for a good loser. The public demonstration that had been engineered on John's behalf had not been due to love of justice; it arose from the fact that half the nation had betted the other half that John would be hanged, and each side was trying to hedge a little.

Lady Gratham looked pensive. "Why is it that when two fathers get together they always look upon the subject from their own point of view and never from that of their children?" she inquired.

"I deny that," replied her husband promptly.

"It is perfectly true," she continued placidly. "The children's point of view has not entered your minds. You won't permit this marriage because Mr. Osborne—Mr. Wynn—"

"Mr. Wynn, if you don't mind," said John.

"Because Mr. Wynn bears you a grudge for sentencing him to be hanged, and you bear him a grudge for not having *been* hanged. So you have determined to make your children unhappy in order to appease your own prejudices."

"My dear Lady Gratham," said John. "There comes a time—even in the happiest marriages—when the moral and mental deficiencies of the relations-in-law come up for discussion. Picture to yourself the result of such a discussion under

these circumstances! A woman occasionally exaggerates her point in order to prove it, does n't she?" Lady Gratham looked at the pattern of the carpet, then at her husband. She smiled demurely, but otherwise preserved an attitude of strict neutrality. "And a man encourages her to do this," continued John, "in order to squash her by logic. Men are such brutes!"

Lady Gratham sighed: twenty-five years of married life teaches a woman a certain defensive philosophy. Lord Gratham's difficulty lay in the fact that he could never be quite certain whether his wife would accept a challenge and argue about it, referring incidentally to every remark he had ever made that was pertinent to the subject under discussion and to every action that had contradicted his words, or whether she would agree with him and say, "You know best, dear." Only an extremely clever man can tell whether a woman's "You know best, dear!" is a sign of surrender or a subtle form of irony.

A woman will say: "I bought a hat cheap at a sale—only nineteen shillings!" But her husband knows in his innermost soul that the real price paid was nineteen shillings and eleven-pence three farthings. A woman is always elevenpence three farthings under the truth in confession and three hundred per cent over it in accusation.

"I remember trying a case in nineteen hundred

and four," commenced Lord Gratham, "and making a little joke—"

"Exactly!" interrupted John. "I have been the victim of one of your little jokes, so I know them. But picture to yourself, Lady Gratham, our young people discussing *us*—after the argument had become a little heated. Arthur, stung by some subtle dig cleverly administered by Chloe, retorts: 'Your father robbed mine of fifteen years!' And Chloe, her lips pressed tightly together, snaps back 'Well, we have only one man's statement to prove that he did n't deserve it!' "

Chloe smiled and looked at Arthur meditatively.

"Why, even you, my dear," said Gratham, turning to his wife, "since the Home Office informed me of this mistake, whenever I have said I was *certain* of anything, even you have invariably replied: 'We are none of us infallible, are we? Look at poor Mr. Wynn!' "

"It would be very unkind and very selfish to break their hearts—just from prejudice," protested Lady Gratham, preparing for tears. Judging by the size of her handkerchief, her tears would be very little ones; but they had the usual effect. A man can stand up against a woman's anger, righteous or unrighteous, just or unjust; he can be the whipping-post against which she relieves her frazzled nerves; he can allow her to

heap on his shoulders the result of a day's shopping at the army and navy stores—an operation that would disturb the equanimity of a saint; but he cannot face the spectacle of falling tears.

"Confound it, my dear!" he ejaculated, his brows puckering and his mouth working, "Confound it! Don't cry!"

"Look at Chloe, sitting there with her heart slowly breaking," sobbed Lady Gratham.

If Chloe's heart was slowly breaking, she admirably concealed the fact. I 'm sorry father won't be reasonable," she remarked; "but I 'm not going to let his prejudices break my heart."

"You take everything so calmly—even your parents," complained Lady Gratham. "We are no longer closed books to our children; we are—we are moving pictures."

"I know I shall never hear the last of this affair," exclaimed Lord Gratham grumpily.

"There 's a certain amount of justice in that," said John.

"I deny that," replied Lord Gratham. "I was doing my duty—as I thought. You will at least admit my sincerity?"

John admitted Gratham's sincerity—up to a point. But he remembered certain aspects of his trial. The jury must have realized that the judge believed him guilty; every look, every word, every inference increased that certainty. It is so

easy to label a fellow-creature in the eyes of the majority. Mrs. Smith, a widow, takes a country cottage; she is pretty, young, demure, detached, and the narrowness and stupidity of her neighbors increase her desire to live her own life. Village title-tattle offends her, village curiosity irritates her, she exasperates callers by refusing to listen to gossip. Some jealous, spiteful cat who has been expeditiously snubbed says to her bosom crony: "Huh! She 's probably an actress or a *divorcée!* She 's so secret about herself!" A day or two later another sweet and charitable member of the same congregation says: "Have you heard? Is n't it dreadful? That Mrs. Smith is an actress who has been divorced!" "No?" says her friend. "Then one must not dream of calling!" Finally Mrs. Smith has to leave the village—the poison from one irresponsible and mischievous tongue having infected the whole community. In the same way, the judge had played on the susceptibilities of the jury like a clever actor, and had succeeded in convincing them of John's guilt; when by right he should have been holding the scales evenly, or, had there been any bias, it should have been in John's favor. But the judge had assumed the prisoner's guilt from the start, and John had been robbed of his liberty. He had been robbed of love, of happiness, of the respect of his fellow-men, of the companionship of his

wife and children, of his career, of everything that made life worth while. He had been robbed unfairly; he had paid another man's debt; and he had come back, like Rip Van Winkle, to find everything changed, his wife almost a stranger to him, the world talking a fresh language, to find himself at fifty—the prime of life—out of date, out of the race, out of touch, a mere looker-on at the life in which he had once played so active a part. And all because of Lord Gratham's prejudice, his obstinacy, his refusal to see the other side. And here was Gratham protesting that his intentions had been of the best, that he had acted from sincere convictions, that he had done his duty.

Once more John's sense of humor came to the rescue, and his surge of wild and almost uncontrolled fury died down as he realized that, human nature being what it was, life was bound to be more or less a harlequinade. For some the leaping through brick walls, for others the buttered slide; for some the twirling pirouette, for others the string of sausages; for some the pantaloon's gullibility, for others the clown's horse-collar. If there is any foundation for the belief in working out one's karma in a series of lives, a child's first words on opening its eyes on this fantastic world must be the ancient cry of the clown: "Here we are again!"

But if there is any justice in the scheme of things, and those of us who believe with the Llama that "Just is the wheel, swerving not a hairbreadth," cannot question it, then a man like John, who had been robbed of fifteen years of his life, must either be paying for past sins or for future joys. The old ideas of heaven and hell were too illogical for reasonable people to credit. That some should be born on velvet and some into misery, by haphazard chance, was a belief that was nothing but an insult to the Creator of mankind. If God were not logical, then the whole scheme of creation was a fantastic farce.

John shook himself like a dog, and returned to practical matters.

"If it were possible to offer you adequate compensation," he heard Gratham remarking, "I should do so; but even the government cannot give a man back fifteen years of his life."

The powers of the government had to be curtailed in *some* directions; there were very few things the government could not do, but this was one of them. "They might give you some form of war bonus, or remit your income tax during the time you were in prison," suggested Gratham. "Of course, you might wake up one morning to find your name on the Honors List."

"We had an Honors List at Portland," replied John, with commendable gravity; "but it consisted

solely of good-conduct stripes. I collected quite a lot. Boiled down, there is very little difference between a good-conduct stripe and the average knighthood—except that a good-conduct stripe has to be earned and cannot under any circumstances be wangled. I presume there was some sort of equivalent to a damehood or damedom, or whatever they call it, on the feminine side of the establishment, but I never learned what it was."

"One must have a certain amount of comic relief in war-time," said Chloe demurely. She was thinking of one or two of her friends who coveted the new distinction and hoped to achieve it. They had not, however, reckoned with the British sense of humor which has frequently destroyed the priceless boons of politicians with more certainty and promptitude than a dozen adverse comments in the House of Commons.

Lord Gratham sighed. This ridiculing of the gravity of titles and decorations was deplorable, but, under the circumstances, perhaps to be understood. "I see your point," he admitted. "But you ought to get a pension. I myself get a pension. The Attorney-General who led for the crown became Lord Chancellor for a week or two, and *he* gets a pension of five thousand a year."

"The law, my dear Gratham, is a conspiracy of the strong to defend themselves from the attacks of the weak," said John.

He remembered a little sermon preached by a cynical friend with whom he had discussed the question of pensions while at Portland. "If you want a pension you can live on," his friend had asserted, "you must go into politics."

"I think it might do some of our politicians good to be compelled to live solely on their own thoughts for fifteen years," John had replied. "They might acquire a sense of proportion."

His friend had laughed cynically. In his opinion, nothing would ever give a politician a sense of proportion.

John had owed his sentence partly to political influence. He could have brought evidence that would have cleared him completely, had he been allowed to do so; but as this would have involved an apparently friendly power, and as his accusations had sounded—to the friends of Germany—like the ravings of a sensational novelist, care had been taken to keep such evidence from appearing. "How were *we* to know that Germany was spying on us even then?" had argued the ex-Home Secretary, when discussing the matter with Lord Gratham.

They *could* have known, but they had refused to listen; just as, a year or two later, they had refused to listen to a great soldier, preferring the soothing syrup of lawyers and self-advertising politicians with spiritual homes upon the Spree.

Had John been allowed to lay bare all the facts, there would have been trouble in that motley camp whose manifestations are picturesquely known to the press as the hidden hand; many well-known people would have been implicated. Germany was a good paymaster. In whichever direction John had turned, he was held up by a stone wall of disbelief, of prejudice, or of money paid for services rendered. Germany cynical, believing in nothing but power and money, had determined to put John out of the way, and, as usual, had succeeded in her endeavors. The National Liberal Club was Germany's mouthpiece—a clever move on Germany's part, for the English members of the National Liberal Club—those whose names did not end in "stein" or "burg"—hated the Northcliffe press more than anything on earth, and the Northcliffe press had realized that war was inevitable, and had warned a stupid and unresponsive people, time and again, to be prepared.

"I am sure that the government will do anything for you in reason—to avoid censure. I know that for a fact," explained Gratham. "I myself am sitting on several royal commissions, and I can read the political barometer."

"I don't want a pension," protested John; "and I warn you, Lord Gratham, I will not be created a viscount."

Lord Gratham pondered. "There is n't any

other form of compensation I can think of," he remarked, "except to be buried in Westminster Abbey."

"Thank you," replied John; "I was buried for fifteen years at Portland."

Gratham protested irritably. John might at least give him the satisfaction of feeling that he had been instrumental in procuring some form of compensation for the error he had been unfortunate enough to have committed.

"My dear Gratham," said John gravely; "your egotism shocks me! The desire to make reparation for an error is one of the worst forms of self-indulgence, and I refuse to entertain it."

"You don't have to live with my wife," protested Gratham feebly. John had never denied that life was not entirely devoid of compensations.

"If I *don't* offer reparation," complained Gratham, "I shall never know a moment's peace."

"It is your duty to make amends," said Lady Gratham, "and the least you can do is to consent to this marriage."

"I object to the marriage—on principle," protested her lord and master.

"I know you do," she replied. "But if they have made up their minds to get married, they will get married—in spite of your principles."

"My dear Gratham," interrupted John, "I

have in my hand something more powerful than principles—a check-book."

If this remark bordered on cynicism, it undoubtedly hung on the railings of truth. "You can refuse your blessing," he added. "A blessing has no market value. *I* can refuse them an allowance. It is a detestable form of tyranny, I admit, but far more effective than a pyrotechnic display of ethics or a homely appeal to sentiment."

"Damn it all!" exclaimed Lord Gratham. "I can't see the force of *your* objections."

"Arthur and Chloe can," replied John. "Excuse me, Lady Gratham!" He picked a white feather from the boa Lady Gratham had laid on the edge of the sofa, and, going over to where Arthur was sitting reading the *Spectator,* he presented it to his son with ironical courtesy. "That is all Arthur gets from me until he joins the army," he announced.

There was a moment's pause during which Arthur became the cynosure of all eyes.

"That makes the thirty-seventh, does n't it?" asked Chloe calmly.

"The thirty-eighth," said Arthur conscientiously.

John turned away with an exclamation of disgust, and found himself facing Lord Gratham.

"I 'm sorry, Wynn," exclaimed Gratham. "It must be a disappointment to you."

"The bitterest one I have had," said John.

"Look here! Damn it all!" said Gratham, after his wife had reminded him of the time. "What you said to me about heredity, and all that—did you mean it?"

"I wanted to tell you what I thought of your jokes—after you had sentenced me to be hanged," replied John confidentially. "But I was n't allowed. It would have been contempt of court. I have been saving it up for fifteen years, and now that I have said it, I feel better."

"Then, if it was n't for Arthur's obstinacy—?" Lord Gratham hesitated and looked at John questioningly.

"If it was n't for my son's refusal to do his duty, I should welcome the honor of an alliance with your family," said John.

"That 's very handsome of you, my dear Wynn," admitted Gratham much relieved. "Look here, Arthur!" he remarked, after they had joined the others in the garden; "your father has behaved like a sportsman. Won't you follow suit?"

"The one thing we pride ourselves upon in the Foreign Office is that we never bow to popular prejudice," said Arthur.

Lord Gratham was annoyed; he turned to John with great cordiality, however, and did the honors

of the county. "I hope we shall see something of you, my dear fellow," he observed. "Do you hunt?"

"My associates have been more hunted than hunting," said John.

"I beg your pardon! Damned thoughtless question! Do you fish?"

"Some of us fished for tobacco—over the wall; but we caught nothing but a reprimand," replied John.

"Hang it all! Perhaps you play chess?" He looked at John, then added quickly: "No, no, I should n't have asked you."

"I have one accomplishment you did n't succeed in killing: the gift of laughter. Life is full of little ironies," said John.

"Quite! Quite! I 've often thought that myself," agreed Gratham, slightly overdoing his anxiety to be tactful.

"Perhaps Arthur will be reasonable—when he realizes they can't live on his pay," said Lady Gratham as she said good-by. "One can't afford high principles without an independent income. Please give my love to your wife."

"And mine," echoed Lord Gratham. *"And* mine! Charming woman—charming! What a surprise your coming back must have been!"

"My dear Gratham," said John gravely, "it *was.*"

CHAPTER XV

Poet: Did my verses please you?
Lesbia: I 'm sure they were charming; but I was thinking of my husband and forgot to listen.

Pro Patria, Act 3.

SEPPY, a little bewildered and extremely annoyed by circumstances, had walked smartly along the lanes and over the fields toward Chalfont St. Giles. He waited in the porch, turning the situation over and over in his mind. The fellow's home-coming had spoilt everything. It had upset Seppy's position in the house, and Amelia most probably would be almost in a state of collapse. A dreary hymn, dragged out to about twice its intended length by the wailing village choir, interrupted his meditations. One or two stragglers pushed open the door furtively and escaped into the brilliant sunshine. Seppy was horror-stricken to discover himself with a cigarette in his hand. It showed to what an extent his nerves were jarred. He quickly threw it away, and assumed an attitude of respectful devotion.

Amelia came out into the porch, someone holding the door for her. Someone always held the door for Amelia. She had that peculiar gift for

conferring favors when she received them. A man who had held open the door for her would go on his way smiling: she could be very gracious when she chose, and she liked people to enjoy doing things for her.

Seppy was astonished at the picture she made as she stood in the porch, meditatively pulling on her gloves and wondering where she could put her contribution to the offertory. Seeing a box labeled "Communications for the Rector," she dropped in a ten-shilling note. The rector, on discovering it, heaved a sigh and wished that all his communications were of the same nature.

"My dear Amelia!" cried Seppy, saluting smartly.

Amelia smiled. How faithful Seppy was! If only he knew when to keep silent and when to talk! Just now she wanted to think, and Seppy would insist on talking; she knew he would insist on talking. There was that look in his face—the look of the chronic chatterer on discovering its prey. And it was so cool and pleasant here under the trees; one could think comfortably, could surrender oneself to a luxurious couch of tumbling thoughts and emotions. If only Seppy had not come to meet her. But he was so kind, so devoted; he had been such a good friend. John must be made to realize what a good friend he had been. Why, how strange, how miraculous it

was that she should be going home to find John there! She hoped he would not consider Seppy a tactless intruder. It was rather tactless of him to come to-day. But of course, he could n't have known or he would n't have come. Seppy was so considerate.

They passed through a gate and followed a path across some fields. Seppy's staccato tones came faintly to her ears. She suddenly realized that he had been talking ever since they left the church. Seppy was useful at times; he could go on talking for ever without pausing for an answer. Amelia had grown so accustomed to him that she knew almost instinctively when to smile in agreement or to shake her head in disapproval without in the least knowing what he was talking about. It is a dangerous art for an over-confident woman to practise on the kind of man who is mean enough to realize what she is doing and to take advantage of it—authors, and students of psychology, for instance. But Seppy was simple-minded, as became a Staff Officer, and he never suspected people of trying to fool him.

"The greatest shock I ever experienced! I assure you, I feel dazed!" he was saying, tripping over concealed roots in his anxiety to keep in step with his companion. But in Amelia's mind ran one phrase, repeated and repeated, sometimes wonderingly, sometimes soothingly, sometimes ter-

rifyingly, sometimes triumphantly: "He has come home—he has come back to life! And he will one day waken me with a kiss!"

Seppy meandered on, and Amelia caught echoes of his talk.

What *you* must feel! Poor little woman! Poor little woman!" He tried to pat her hand. To be called "poor little woman" *and* to have her hand patted in sympathy, when her heart was singing pæans of thanksgiving—like that beautiful lark up there in the blue!—was a little too much even for Amelia, who forgave much but forgot little.

"Please, Seppy," said Amelia, shivering a little as he touched her. She did n't want to be touched by Seppy any more. That was strange. She had rather liked his taking her arm and squeezing her hand and even kissing it; but now—she did n't want him to touch her. She would hate John to see her pawed about by Seppy. She knew what John would think about it; she meant to be very frank with John—*and* with Seppy. She would like to be frank with everyone, but it was so much easier not to be; it was so much easier to have the reputation of being pleasant to everybody.

"Ah!" cried Seppy, a little hurt. "I irritate you! I worry you! It is my desire to be helpful! Forgive me! I find it hard to be calm." He blew his nose violently, and stuffed his handkerchief up his sleeve.

Amelia wondered what the lark was saying as it sang its wonderful song of joy, poised up there in the limitless blue, a portent of spring, of hope, of life, of fruition. How beautiful was the English country, so restful, and yet sad—sad by its very beauty. The peace of it! How horrible Portland must have been! She shuddered, and could almost hear the clank of the chains, the tramp of a file of prisoners.

Seppy's spurs were rattling and he was trying to keep step, talking in his breathless, staccato little bursts. "Every government must commit an occasional injustice," he was saying; "but no wise government ever admits it."

The loneliness, the hopelessness of those years, mused Amelia. She had kept her promise not to write. Was she wise to have kept it? Had she not betrayed him for the sake of her children? *Was* it for the sake of her children? Why had she promised? Why had she kept her promise? But he understood; he always understood everything—even when she failed to understand *him*. She hated being laughed at, and John had such a queer sense of humor. If John were a soldier, and had been shot, he would have laughed at the bullet that he had stopped. It was so like John to laugh at Seppy; but Seppy was such a dear, he was too nice to be made fun of. One could treat Seppy like a faithful retriever, and he would ap-

preciate a careless pat with a dog's loyalty. Of course, John was different; John was always a bit of an unknown quantity—even when they had been so much *one* with each other that the rest of the world had not appeared to exist. What was John doing? Had he resented her going to church? Ought she to have left him the first morning of his return? She had felt so restless; action appeared to be a necessity. What a long way off it seemed!

They left the fields and turned into a winding lane.

"You are thinking, Amelia?" queried Seppy sympathetically. "You are perhaps regretting?"

"No, Seppy," replied Amelia absently; "I was just letting you talk. I know it soothes you."

"If one talks enough, one occasionally stumbles on to a profound truth—perhaps a great thought," remarked Seppy. "Great thoughts are helpful in painful situations. Sometimes any kind of remark will temporarily ease the strain. I remember hearing a story of the commander-in-chief, when things were going very badly with us at Mons, and he was waiting to hear the result of an order he had given that might or might not relieve the pressure on our left. He stood, surrounded by his staff. You would think they were discussing the possibilities of failure, wondering what was going to happen. But no, no!

Not at all! The commander-in-chief, having issued his orders, turned to one of his staff captains and said: 'Do you mind telling me what kind of boot-polish your man uses? I should like to get some!' A human touch! What? It eased the strain! It brought tragedy down to an every-day level, and they all felt more hopeful. Oh, Amelia! What can I say to calm your whirling brain, to soothe your shattered nerves?"

"There 's nothing you can do, Seppy," replied Amelia, "except to let me think things out—without interrupting me unnecessarily."

Seppy sighed. The word in season, the illuminative phrase, the helpful suggestion, refused the offices of his usually ready tongue. His brain felt a little dazed. He was suffering keenly in sympathy with her; but he was suffering still more at the thought of what he himself stood to lose. He had little initiative, and had grown accustomed to finding a solution to almost every problem in army orders or King's regulations. It would have simplified the situation had John proved to be a scoundrel, or even a man coarsened or brutalized by the life he had led in prison. But John was unquestionably a gentleman, extremely presentable, and quite a man of the world. Seppy, like so many men who are easy to get on with, had no morals, merely an abnormally active conscience. For twelve years he had placed Amelia on a pedes-

tal; he had made himself generally useful to her, and he had enjoyed his polite slavery. He had been very faithful, extraordinarily considerate of her comfort. He was very, very fond of her; in fact, he loved her—as far as he was capable of loving anyone other than himself. The problem worried him, the tragedy of it dazed him, the situation was altogether too much for him. What were they to do? He refused to give her up. Why should he give her up? Her friendship, her companionship, meant so much to him. Without her life would be dull gray. He would grow old. No longer would he be able to laugh at the flying years. No; he would refuse to be thrown over.

"He said he would fight me fairly for your affection," exclaimed Seppy suddenly.

Amelia looked up, a little startled. Then she smiled and sighed. John was always chivalrous.

"How can he fight me fairly? The handicap is all on his side," continued Seppy.

"I refuse to be taken for granted—by anyone," Amelia protested. "My children take me for granted: that is a penalty a woman pays to nature. But it is her own fault if her husband or her lover takes her for granted."

She paused for a moment and faced him, then spoke earnestly, almost passionately. "A woman who respects herself must be won—and held—

every minute of every day. I give nothing, but I respond to *everything*."

Seppy looked at her, still more perturbed and puzzled. She was not behaving as he had anticipated she would. He found it impossible to understand her attitude. Perhaps she was overdone, worn out; possibly she was a little hysterical, otherwise she would not speak of things concerning which a woman was supposed to show considerable reticence.

He tried to soothe her; but Amelia, being a woman, instinctively realized what he was thinking.

"I am not in the least hysterical," she told him. "I was never more sure of myself."

This was true. She was very much amused by his conscientious desire to calm her. She was beginning to be very sorry for Seppy. A psychologist would have realized that John's stock was rising rapidly.

Seppy was trying to keep in step with her, and she found his efforts in this direction a trifle irritating. Amelia was a graceful walker, and she rarely soiled her shoes, even in muddy weather. Seppy had grown accustomed to the regulation pace, and he invariably stepped off with the left foot. He found Amelia's graceful but erratic methods supremely difficult to imitate. For him it was one of those days when worries accumulated,

and everything appeared to go wrong. Moist beads of perspiration appeared on his brow; his cap blew off; he dropped his cane; his Sam Browne worried him; he had used his last match.

Seppy had always accepted the old English idea that, when a man married a woman, he won her—that he could not possibly go on winning her again, every day, Sundays included, or he would have little time to spare for golf. Besides, it was not playing the game. When a woman said "I will!" she surrendered finally. When a man said "I will!" he frequently thought he meant it. In some cases he did.

Seppy's ideas concerning women always amused Amelia; it was obvious that he had acquired his views of her sex from a perusal of the mid-Victorian novels. "You may think a woman surrenders, Seppy; but she does n't know herself *when* she has surrendered—finally. I shall never surrender," she added quickly, almost fiercely, "until I 'm old and gray and toothless, until I look my age, until the pressure of my hand evokes no answering pressure, but only a smile of pity."

Seppy sighed. It was Sunday, and Amelia had been to church. He would scarcely have thought so, judging by her conversation. The more he saw of women, the less he understood them. He was amazingly ignorant concerning matters of sex—there was very little mention of sex in army

orders—and he had no desire to learn more. He was fastidious, and fundamentally decent; he was a sentimentalist, but had never been anything worse. He had never looked for rewards; he had been content to fetch and carry. People laughed at him. Fortunately, he was ignorant of the fact. Nature is cruel in setting a seal on men who are constitutionally decent and remain unmarried; but nature never considers the individual, only the race.

"Amelia," he told her, "you are a thousand women rolled into one!"

"Every woman is," replied Amelia. "But it takes a clever man to know which woman is having her innings on any particular day." She laughed mischievously. "What am I to-day, Seppy?"

Seppy was not very subtle, but he possessed a certain amount of tact. "You are, as ever, the woman I adore," he answered, with a fresh attempt to get into step with her.

Amelia smiled. Seppy was like so many men who, when all the women who helped to make up the woman she was, happened to be chattering at the same time, instead of helping one of them to dominate, put it all down to hysteria, and imagined that a compliment, or a kiss, would stop the chatter. She sighed as she caught sight of her house through a gap in the wood, and wondered

whether John knew more about women than Seppy did.

John met them half-way down the drive. "It must have been a short sermon," he said.

It is frequently something of a problem for a woman to decide which is the most aggravating trait in a man—too much self-confidence or too much humility; but a man's arrogance is so often the result of accepted views and proved ethics sent journeying along a straight line of rails, whereas a woman's philosophy owes its existence to things and events that touch her personally, that move in a circle of which she herself is the center. To a woman a man's ethics are narrow in their logical certainty, and cut and dried in their application—her own being guided by circumstances. A logical man can be amazingly irritating at times. But overdone humility has its disadvantages. A humble man rarely hits back, and refuses to argue. He sighs. And what can be more irritating, or more fundamentally arrogant, than the sigh of humility? Women may be uncertain, perplexing, changeable, illogical; they may jump to conclusions unreasonably, and dislike a woman because her skirt hangs down at the back, or a man because of his manner of eating hot buttered toast. But men are ten times more exasperating on account of their pedantic craze for being just and reasonable.

John hated the line of conduct he had determined to take; but, having made up his mind to it, he was obliged to see it through. And Amelia's good resolutions—her longing to give, give, give, and to go on giving, the woman's privilege and tragedy—all the thoughts that had come to her as she listened to the song of the lark, and heard Seppy's babble without heeding it—her determination to break down the fifteen-year-old wall that had divided her from John—the spontaneity of her surrender was checked by her husband's detachment, by his courtesy to herself and his patronage of Seppy.

Amelia shrank back into herself. The prince had not yet kissed her into wakefulness.

"I did n't wait for the sermon," she explained. "I could n't attend to the service, so I came out, and found Seppy waiting in the porch."

"Splendid fellow!" said John. "Some men are born to wait, while others have waiting thrust upon them." He did not realize that he was talking in a style that had gone out of fashion with the nineteenth century.

"Would you have waited—on the chance of my coming out early?" she asked.

"No, my dear!" replied John. "I should have sent in word that I did n't intend to wait any longer."

Seppy was a little shocked. "In church?" he protested.

"A woman does n't cease to be a woman—even in church," said John.

"Where did you learn that?" inquired Amelia.

"I have in me the makings of a lot of little entertainments," replied John, his eyes twinkling. "I have had quite a busy morning. I have made the acquaintance of my son James, and of your friend here, and I have refused to countenance Arthur's engagement."

Amelia looked up, astonished. "You have refused?" she cried.

"Lord and Lady Gratham have been here. They sent you their love," explained John.

"I hope you are not going to upset *everything,* John," said Amelia, with a sigh.

"Believe me, I shall do nothing unreasonable," replied John.

Amelia frowned. "What will people think?" she protested.

"It really does n't matter what people think," said John. "It 's doing the things they think that matters. I have refused them an allowance."

"But they can't live on Arthur's pay," exclaimed Amelia.

"I am quite sure they have no intention of living on Arthur's pay," replied John.

Amelia looked up inquiringly. "But if you have refused them an allowance—"

"I don't intend to give it; I was just wondering how they proposed to get it," said John speculatively.

"I can't help thinking you are behaving unreasonably," protested Seppy.

John looked at him, a dangerous light in his eyes. "It is n't your pidgin," he said.

"I am an intimate friend of the family," cried Seppy, turning to Amelia for support. He was genuinely angry with John for behaving like an autocrat at such short notice, and he wanted Amelia to realize that she had a friend who would fight for her, in spite of everything.

Amelia called up her first line of reserves. She took out her handkerchief. "Everything was going so smoothly," she sobbed.

Seppy trembled with emotion; he wanted to tell Amelia how much he sympathized with her, how anxious he was to help her. It unmanned him to see a woman in tears.

John chuckled. He was behaving like a brute, and he knew it; but, while deploring the necessity, he pressed home the attack to its logical conclusion. He was out for victory, and he meant to achieve it. The enemy could retire with all the honors of war, but his guns must be spiked and his arms given up.

"When a woman cries, it means that she has had to call up her last line of defense, and that victory is in sight," he explained.

"You are heartless, sir! Absolutely heartless!" protested Seppy.

It was impossible for him to remain there any longer; he was too thoroughly upset. He would go back to the War Office and do some work.

He did very little work at the War Office that afternoon, but consoled himself later on with tea and muffins at his club. He returned to the attack the following day.

John accompanied his wife to the house. Each was silent, thinking hard, wondering, alert. On reaching the living-room, John threw himself into the chair and took up the *Observer*.

"Nothing to report," he read aloud. "There was an unimportant raid on our front-line trenches, but the enemy was forced to retire with some losses."

Amelia frowned. "What do you mean, John?" she asked, looking at him steadily.

"Nothing, my dear," replied John, his tone a masterpiece of innocence. "I was—er—quoting the official report!"

Amelia looked at him with grave disapproval, silently gathered up her gloves and prayer-book, and went upstairs to her room. John threw down the paper, made a movement to follow her, then

turned to the window and laughed—a little defiantly.

"Well, Seppy, my boy!" he murmured. "What about it?"

CHAPTER XVI

Princess: Father! I have listened to this man who is rousing the country! He speaks the truth.
King: He will suffer for it. And so will you—for listening.
Pro Patria, Act 4.

ARTHUR did not return to lunch. Obsessed by the brilliant idea that had occurred to him, he went up to town—after lunching with Chloe and her parents—and indulged in the popular British sport known as wire-pulling, having previously arranged with Chloe to meet him on an early train the following morning. Neither Olive nor Jimmy put in an appearance until dinner-time. John and Amelia lunched together *tête-à-tête;* they spoke of things of little importance. After lunch Amelia retired to her room to lie down, but she found it impossible to rest. She sat down and wrote to Seppy, telling him that it would be wiser for him not to come down to Chalfont for some time. Then she tore up the letter, having come to the conclusion that it would be easier to allow things to take their course. Instead of trying to govern circumstances, she would allow circumstances to govern her.

John read the papers, and went carefully

through some bound volumes of *Punch* from the year 1902 up to the present date. He wanted to realize what the world had been thinking, saying, and doing. Incidentally, he thought a great deal about Amelia. Had he exchanged one prison for another? From being the slave of rules and regulations, was he to be the slave of convention and pretense? It was easier to criticize than to create, he thought; easier to judge others than oneself, to invent a standard of living than to live. Would it not be wiser to take the world as one found it, and to accept the views of the majority? Why worry? Reformers had battered their heads against the wall of public opinion and popular prejudice for centuries, with little injury to any but themselves. Why be a reformer? Why not live on the surface, as the others did, and cease to criticize life and one's neighbor's mode of living? The accepted way was the easier way; Amelia had followed it, his children were following it, their friends likewise. Was he to be the discord in the harmony of their own particular circle? They had achieved 1917 gradually and by a natural process; he had stumbled upon it suddenly, and had paused to draw breath. The man who kicks continually only wears out his boots and must then go bare-foot. Why worry? The majority was always right. Good Lord! He must be growing old if he was meditating bowing to pop-

ular prejudice. Agreeing with the majority was the first sign either of age or of intellectual atrophy. One *must* worry—if one were an optimist and placed one's faith in the world's upward tendency. The majority was *never* right. The world was reformed, its thoughts guided, its instincts controlled, by the few—the few who think sanely, imaginatively, selflessly. While he had a kick left in him he would never give in. By ideals he lived and with ideals he would die; and to hell with the pessimists who croaked a policy of *laissez-faire*.

England had survived her politicians, her profiteers, her pacifists, her academic intellectuals; she had even survived her general officers and senior admirals. The English were crazy; but when once you realized the fact, accepted it, and laughed at it, you got along very well. If only they were not so self-complacent. His own friends—the men of breeding and the men of letters—were awfully decent, on the whole; narrow perhaps, and prejudiced undoubtedly, but fundamentally decent. He could n't stand the middle classes, but that is scarcely to be wondered at; they had n't sufficient breeding to conceal their selfishness, their rapacity, their self-complacence and ignorance; they aped their betters, and their intonations were jarring; they were so afraid of giving themselves away that they gave nothing

away; they overran the army, the navy, the church, the bar, the House of Lords, and the once exclusive clubs. In fact, they overran England. He had a great admiration, an affection, for the lower classes, though he hated the phrase. They, too, were fundamentally decent. But, unfortunately, England was governed by the pretenders —the people who were neither "fish, nor fowl, nor good red-herring."

Perhaps the war would alter things. But had it altered them at all? Nearly all the decent men had been killed; every decent man who was at all fit had joined up in 1914. Those who joined up under the Derby Scheme, or who had later on been conscripted, were almost as bad as those who had not joined up at all. What sort of future would there be for England? Those who had prospered, those who would survive the war and have sufficient money to indulge in the luxury of children, would be the shirkers, the slackers, the profiteers, those who had taken advantage of their country's needs to bleed their country's exchequer. The people who mattered were fighting —for a pittance; even if they returned, the majority would return crippled in health, in financial circumstances. Their breed would die out. It was a ghastly outlook. One could only prophesy a country run for and by the middle classes. The flower of the youth of a generation were wiped

off the slate. What would the children of the "indispensables" be like? He shuddered, and thought of his son.

He had been right to protest, to take a strong attitude. Amelia was annoyed, hurt; but what else could he do?

No, the outlook was not hopeful; but, unless the government taxed brains and intelligence out of existence, he would not despair.

Amelia came down to tea. She was over-tired and over-strained, consequently she chattered about little things. John enjoyed it; he realized that Amelia was dreading a pause in the conversation, and wanted to keep off fundamental things for the moment. He told her stories of prison life, of the men he had been herded among, of the routine, the lack of humanity, the dull, drab, dreary ugliness of everything; but he told it with so much humor that Amelia was both interested and amused. But John's manner of telling his story only emphasized the tragedy of it. If a man can joke about hell, thought Amelia, would he find heaven tiresome?

They strolled about the garden after tea, and Amelia displayed her roses with some pride. John breathed deeply and realized the peace of it all. Twilight came, that magic link between day and night. The country was placidly dozing; it was an eternal chess-board on which everybody

made their moves—kings, queens, bishops, pawns —and then others took their places. But the board remained—England remained. Men fought, gambled, schemed, pulled wires, hoarded, grumbled, endured; the centuries slipped by; but England was always England, and always would be. A tiny country, mapped out in miniature squares, exquisite, hideous, lonely, crowded, with little hills that assumed the grandeur of mountains, little woods that seemed like forests, streams dignified by the names of rivers, long winding roads with hedges under which nestled a thousand wild flowers, ugly mean streets and hideous jerry-built villas, a country swept by biting east winds and blustering southwest gales, exquisitely clear under a frosty sky, sleepily restful under a summer sun, depressing beyond words under low gray clouds: but always England. There was magic in the word. Half the world spoke of England as home. John laughed: he paid the average Englishman's most glowing tribute to his native land. "It is n't half bad," he said.

And so to dinner, with open windows—for the Daylight-Saving Bill was in operation, and lights were unnecessary; afterward a record or two on the gramophone—Jimmy at the wheel; and then to bed.

Amelia lay awake, thinking of the things she

had meant to say to John and had not said; longing to break down the barrier—the intangible something that still lay between them, yet unwilling to acknowledge its presence for fear of hurting him.

Monday was rather an exciting day, on the whole. John went over to Chenies to see the Grathams, and stayed to lunch. Chloe had gone to town, and Lady Gratham made spasmodic appearances; but Gratham was an entertaining host, and he and John got on very well together.

The humor of the situation occasionally struck Lord Gratham; which led to his relieving himself by giving vent to chuckles and guffaws—for which he apologized. During the afternoon the telephone called him, and he returned to his wife, who was presiding over the tea things, with a face puckering like a baby's.

"What has happened?" she inquired, pausing with the sugar-tongs in the air.

"I no longer have a daughter," replied her husband grimly. "She has been married—by special license—to-day—to your son," he added, turning to John.

"Don't be foolish, Archibald!" said Lady Gratham, continuing to pour out tea. "You have a daughter who knows her own mind, and that is more than I did at her age. Sugar, Mr. Wynn?"

"No, thank you!" replied John. He had con-

ceived a higher opinion of his son than he had ever had before. Arthur had done exactly what John himself would have done—under the circumstances.

Lord Gratham had objected to the engagement; John had objected to it, too. John's objection was that Arthur had not worn the King's uniform, Lord Gratham's that John had. Though Gratham realized that John was innocent, he found it hard to forgive him for being innocent—much as he liked John personally. John had made him think; he had made him question his whole career as a judge. Gratham was a Tory, and disliked questioning anything. John had made him wonder how many other innocent people had been sentenced owing to his lack of imagination and ignorance of psychology; in fact, John was a walking conscience to Gratham, who was terrified of publicity.

On returning home, John found his household somewhat perturbed by the news that Arthur had conscientiously telephoned to them. John explained its reception by the Grathams.

Amelia was worried. Her house had been invaded by journalists—the news of John's release having reached Fleet Street early that morning, and, the news from the front being of the "nothing to report" order, it was too good a story to be missed.

"There have been twenty-three of them here this afternoon," confessed Amelia plaintively. "I said you had gone away, so they all took photographs of the house, and of Parsons, and of the Jersey cows, and all expressed their regret at missing *you*—all except someone from the *Morning Megaphone,* who is still in the library. I sent him in some tea. Parsons says he is sitting there smoking your cigarettes and reading a book of Marie Corelli's. I said I would let him know when you came back."

She handed John a card on which was engraved: "H. Simms, the *Morning Megaphone.*"

"Does n't *he* want to photograph the cows?" asked John.

"Oh, he has already done that," replied Amelia. "Parsons told him the story of you and the pianola; he said it was priceless, and gave her half a crown. Parsons has done very well for herself, and her stories improved as the day progressed."

John chuckled. He liked Amelia's attitude; there was a kind of comic pathos in her voice that was extremely attractive. "Seppy arrived just now," continued Amelia; "so I sent him in to talk to this H. Simms."

Seppy was rather like a jack-in-the-box, thought John; the snubs of yesterday were the stimulants of to-day. He had arrived, beautifully groomed

and smiling, about four o'clock, and had stumbled across Jimmy near the front gates.

"Hallo, Seppy, old man!" was Jimmy's greeting. "Cheerio! Have you seen the mater?"

Seppy explained that he was looking for her; he had been told that she was somewhere in the garden.

"I say, then you have n't heard the news?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"What news?" asked Seppy anxiously. A thousand conjectures raced through his brain, all of them wrong.

"About Arthur and Chloe," replied Jimmy, with a cynical chuckle. "Arthur 's managed to wangle a special license out of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he and Chloe have just got spliced. Jolly sporting of them? What? Hope they won't regret it."

"Good gracious me!" said Seppy, greatly perturbed. "What does your mother say?"

"Oh, she always says the same thing," replied Jimmy genially. "You know the sort of thing: 'I have tried to do my duty to the children, and this is how I 'm treated.' She always takes that line when anything unusual happens."

Seppy coughed. "Where is your father?" he inquired.

"Over at the Grathams', trying to get old Gratham to fork up something, I suppose," re-

plied Jimmy, with that peculiar frankness for which the younger generation is celebrated.

"Do you know, Seppy? he 's rather decent; knows the proper way to treat a fellow, and all that. I rather like him."

Seppy pondered over this admission with some seriousness.

"You know, Seppy, old man," continued Jimmy, gravely contemplating the gallant Colonel, "you know, I can't help thinking it 'd be more sporting of you to declare your innings closed!"

Seppy fidgeted. This was too much. From a boy to whom he had shown exaggerated indulgence, too! It was a little thoughtless, a little unfeeling, distinctly ungracious.

"You 've had a dashed good run for your money," said Jimmy, with his hands in his pockets, as he dug the newly graveled path with his heel, much to the annoyance of the head gardener, who was tying up some rambler roses in the vicinity; "and it 's about time you gave someone else a show!"

"My dear fellow, I advise you not to meddle with what does n't concern you!" protested Seppy.

"It does concern me," replied Jimmy. "It concerns me devilish close. That 's why I 'm advising you to clear out."

"Would you mind telling your mother that I am here?" said Seppy rather irritably.

"Parsons told her some time ago. She said you were to wait," explained Jimmy, unperturbed.

This explanation scarcely increased Seppy's self-confidence. He took out his cigarette-case and offered it to his young mentor.

"No, thanks!" said Jimmy. "The guv'nor says I 'll never get my flannels if I smoke before I 'm eighteen: bad for the wind and all that."

"That 's what *I* always told you," protested Seppy.

"I know," replied Jimmy; "but you 're different. Naturally, a fellow can't help treating what his guv'nor says with a certain amount of respect."

"I was under the impression that the modern school-boy respected no one and nothing," said Seppy tartly.

Jimmy chuckled; he had drawn Seppy beautifully. The poor old chap was getting quite wrathy. Besides, it was all rot about a fellow respecting no one. He could n't help respecting anyone who played the game—chaps like Haig, and Beatty, and George Hirst, and—well, his father had played the game, and a fellow could n't help respecting *him*. "Of course, I would 'nt let him know it for anything," explained Jimmy. "It might make him stick on side. But we had a bit of a yarn yesterday, and he was so jolly decent that I—well, I made up my mind I 'd see him through and back his side."

Seppy blew his nose violently and tried to collect his scattered self-confidence. But he had one more ordeal to face—two, in fact—before being sent into the library to entertain H. Simms of the *Morning Megaphone.*

He met Olive in the hall. "Hallo, Seppy! Mother will be in directly!" was her greeting. "Run along, Jimmy! I want to talk to Seppy," she added.

"I 've just been having a little heart-to-heart talk with him myself," explained Jimmy, grinning.

"Look here, Seppy!" said Olive, as they made their way into the living-room; "I 've been thinking about things."

"My hat!" cried Jimmy, with assumed astonishment.

Harrow was snubbed properly by Olive, who then turned to Seppy. "We 've liked having you about the house, and you 've been jolly useful," she explained; "but—well, Seppy! I think you 'd better go on leave."

Seppy was certainly being pounded on all sides; his position was becoming untenable. He must either make a demonstration—or withdraw. "Is that what your mother thinks?" he inquired huffily.

"It 's what *we* think, Seppy," replied Olive reproachfully. Mother is n't capable of managing

her own affairs; she was never taught clear thinking."

Seppy protested. Really, these young people—

"My dear Seppy! You know perfectly well that when we say a thing we mean it," said Olive coolly.

"I refuse to be dictated to by a couple of children," cried Seppy indignantly.

Olive smiled. Of course, he was perfectly at liberty to please himself, but it was just as well to let him know how *they* felt about it.

"For twelve years," protested Seppy sentimentally, "I have been almost a father to you."

"You meant well, Seppy," admitted Olive kindly. "But now that father has come home, we feel he has more right to parental privileges than *you* have. Another thing, Seppy," she added, smiling deliciously; "we like him. Don't we, Jimmy?"

Jimmy wriggled with embarrassment. "He 's quite decent," admitted the young Harrovian. Hang it! Why must girls always *say* the things a fellow only *thinks?*

"So we felt we 'd better warn you—in case mother tried to persuade you to keep on hanging around," concluded Olive judicially.

This was the last straw. Seppy was not likely to hang around where he was not wanted. Where

was Amelia? Why did she not come and rescue him from this equivocal conversation?

She came at last. "I 'm sorry to have kept you waiting," she remarked.

Was she sorry? Seppy wondered. She did not appear to be very much perturbed. "I am accustomed to be kept waiting," he replied, with a flavor of martyrdom in his voice. This was scarcely true; a colonel is rarely kept waiting—especially when he wears red tabs.

"You have heard about the wedding?" inquired Amelia after Parsons had brought in the tea.

"I must say, it is the first time I ever heard of an official in the Foreign Office doing anything on impulse," said Seppy. "Do you expect him back to-night?"

"I wonder if he 'll bring her with him," muttered Jimmy reflectively.

"I know I 'd jolly well see *I* was n't left behind on *my* wedding-day," exclaimed Olive.

Blushing brides are out of date. How can a bride blush when she faces a battery of cameras? Besides, a blush implies self-consciousness. The new generation has its faults, but self-consciousness is scarcely one of them. And marriage is no longer a step into the unknown. Six shillings judiciously expended can automatically raise the curtain; and even sevenpence goes a long way.

Consequently, one meets many a married couple who are friends as well as lovers. When things can be discussed instead of whispered, progress heaves a sigh of relief, and Mrs. Grundy sends frantic telegrams to her friend and counselor, whose address is rarely mentioned in polite society.

CHAPTER XVII

Reformer: Who is this person?
Secretary: He comes as an Ambassador.
Reformer: What Autocrat does he represent?
Secretary: The mightiest of all—Public Opinion.
Pro Patria, Act 4.

SEPPY had come down determined to assert himself; he wanted his position in the household to be very clearly defined. But it was scarcely an easy task to put his determination into words without hurting Amelia and jeopardizing his own desires. He was even a little uncertain regarding those desires. Just how far he was prepared to go was a poblem he had resolutely refused to envisage. He had grown accustomed to his standing in the household, and he disliked change of any kind. In his moments of quiet reflection he thought of himself as a true type of the constant lover, unselfish, chivalrous; but would his sense of chivalry be equal to the demands that might be made upon it? His obvious line of action would be to retire, and to nurse his regrets in silence. But Seppy was too much of an egotist to renounce anything he had set his heart upon, unless forced to do so by circumstances. On the

other hand, suppose Amelia discovered that she cared for him more than she did for her husband: what then would be his line of action? Would he be ready to face publicity, the horrors of the divorce court, for Amelia's sake? He loved Amelia; he would go on loving her—always.

"I hope this has not been too much of a shock?" inquired Seppy sympathetically, after Olive and Jimmy had disappeared from the room.

Amelia smiled. "I think it will be an excellent thing for Arthur," she replied. "He is so accustomed to getting his own way."

"But they can't live on four hundred a year," protested Seppy.

Amelia smiled. She and John had married on less than that. It had been a struggle, but, looking back, those had been the happiest days of her life. They had both believed so in the future; they had faced life full of hope, full of confidence. When Arthur was born, family friends had pulled long faces and had exclaimed at their lack of wisdom; but John and Amelia were not sufficiently fashionable to have acquired those views that have since become so popular. To them, children were of more importance than smart clothes and a semi-fashionable address. One doubts if they would ever have learned wisdom in that respect.

But Arthur and Chloe belonged to a different generation; they prided themselves on their com-

mon sense, and they cried for self-development—in other words, a good time. Amelia was sufficiently a woman of the world to refrain from argument.

Seppy rose and stood with his back to the fireplace. "Amelia," he exclaimed, "I want to discuss a matter that concerns ourselves very closely. I want to know what my position is going to be?"

Amelia looked at him gravely. He did not realize that he was being tried, judged, and sentenced. Amelia was too much of a woman to allow him to guess that he was being tested.

"What do you want it to be?" she asked.

Seppy hesitated. He was anxious to explain his ideas, but he found it extremely difficult to make a start.

"You know that I love you, don't you?" he said.

Amelia smiled. "How much do you love me?" she inquired.

Seppy frowned. A man likes to have such things taken for granted; he considers that the words "I love you" should cover all possibilities.

"Do you love me well enough to be callous of public opinion?" Amelia looked innocent enough as she asked this question. It was difficult to tell whether she was serious or merely making fun of him.

"Of public opinion?" cried Seppy scornfully. He was about to express his contempt for public opinion when his native caution suddenly asserted itself. "What exactly do you mean, Amelia?" he added.

Some sixteen years before he had been asked the same question, and had very unjustly been accused of butterfly proclivities. He denied that he had ever been a butterfly; he possessed a genius for single-minded devotion to one woman—at any rate, to one woman at a time. And as long as she remained kind, so long would Seppy remain constant.

"Would you think the world well lost for me?" asked Amelia in a voice that was low and provocative.

"Undoubtedly!" cried Seppy, with admirable fervor.

He meant it, too—with certain reservations. Since he held a staff appointment, he would rather not lose it entirely. He would not mind losing the world, as long as the world remained in ignorance of the fact that he had lost it. He had a horror of bad form or of achieving a reputation for what is politely termed "gallantry." He was prepared to sacrifice a great deal on the altar of Amelia's love; but, owing to the fact that some of his forebears had been born on the wrong—or the right—side of the Tweed, he was occa-

sionally visited by spasms of caution, and desired to know exactly how far and to what he was committing himself.

Amelia watched him with some amusement and a little chagrin; then she quietly slipped the pin from her bomb and threw it at his head.

"If I loved *you,* do you think I could go on living with *him* and receiving you here as a visitor?" she asked.

It was true that John's home-coming had complicated things. Seppy was suffering from an unusual feeling of embarrassment. He no longer felt at home in the house; his position was a trifle invidious. Seppy had the true egotist's love of talking about himself in the ordinary way, but he was feeling a curious reluctance to indulge in his favorite amusement at the moment. "I have always said, Amelia, that with me it must be all or nothing," he asserted.

"Which do you want it to be?" inquired Amelia, with apparent innocence.

Perhaps it was a little cruel of her to play with him, but what reasonable woman could resist such an opportunity?

"Need you ask?" protested Seppy, with some warmth. Then he thought unconsciously of his high reputation, his assured position, and his comfortable mode of living, and a doubt of his own worthiness to live on such romantic heights in-

sidiously invaded his well-protected self-esteem.

Amelia looked at him curiously. "Suppose I had to choose between you and John?" she asked.

Seppy muttered something about twelve years' devotion, but Amelia interrupted him.

"My choice would have nothing to do with the past," she said. "If it had, I should choose John. Nothing counts so much with women as the right word at the right moment. You take it for granted that your twelve years' devotion should be rewarded; John takes it for granted that, as I am his wife, I shall go on *being* his wife."

She clenched her fists and dug them into the cushions.

"I don't want a husband—in the academic sense," she cried. "I want a lover who will carry me off my feet—in spite of my years."

She turned her head and looked out of the window, a little ashamed of her outburst.

"It is difficult to think of you with grown-up children," reflected Seppy.

Amelia smiled. "You have a happy knack for paying pretty compliments," she said.

Seppy frowned. Amelia was at times a little difficult to follow; she jumped from one subject to another; her thoughts turned somersaults—they were one moment exquisite in repose, and the next they were cutting capers with a grin.

She was unexpected. Seppy rather prided himself on this discovery.

"A house is so empty without a man in it," continued Amelia. "There are certain things a woman can never master—such as rates and taxes and the choosing of wine and tobacco. I gradually drifted into leaving these things to you. I hated having to do them myself. And I liked having you to escort me when I went to theaters and concerts. A woman alone can never get the best seats," she added, a little ruefully, unaware of the subtilty of her remark. "Even the most modern girl likes to have a man to take her about. It was because I realized you were fond of me that I let you do so much for me. I knew it pleased you; did n't it?"

She looked up at him with a very attractive smile. When a woman has made up her mind that the time has come for an admirer to cease admiring at close quarters, she does her best to assist distance to lend enchantment to the memory. And in that is she not wise? It is kinder to the man, and kinder to herself. After all, the future is largely built on memories. She would like Seppy to remember his days of devotion to her with kind thoughts, and never with bitterness. She would like him always to think of her as a young and attractive woman. She would like him sometimes to feel a little sad at having lost her,

that their friendship had been thoroughly worth while.

"You have given me all the happiness I have ever enjoyed," said Seppy mournfully. His remark was not strictly true, but there are times when good intentions are better than cold facts.

"And yet, I am a middle-aged woman," sighed Amelia.

"Not to me," protested Seppy genuinely.

Seppy had never realized that she was growing older, and that had made her feel young. And, because she felt young, she wanted every minute of what youth was left to her. She wanted to go on being desirable. So many women still believed in hell, and in a God who was always waiting to stab at their little vanities.

"You are very understanding," said Amelia. "If it had n't been for you I should probably have become terribly religious and made myself a nuisance to the children."

Seppy looked at her, a trifle shocked.

"Most women are afraid to think about religion," she added. "That 's why they go to church."

"That sounds almost blasphemous," protested Seppy. "I go to church, but I never think of questioning what I 'm believing. The whole thing is cut and dried."

"Don't you understand?" cried Amelia, almost

fiercely. "Nothing is cut and dried—nothing, nothing!" She went on, her voice low and vibrant, her fingers moving nervously. "If I only knew what John really thought about everything, I should not be so restless. When he went away I was a girl, and he was a young man, full of vitality and high spirits. People might say that the wisest thing would be to accept the situation and to be content with each other's friendship! But I can't—I can't accept it! You have got accustomed to seeing me grow a little older each year. He has n't. It must have been a shock to him when he saw me on Saturday. Time is much more cruel to a woman than it is to a man. Oh, yes, it is!" she added, seeing his look of sympathetic protest. "It 's a tragic moment when a woman realizes she is no longer wanted."

Seppy reflected. "Just as a man gets a shock the first time a boy of twenty calls him 'sir,' " he suggested.

"My dear Seppy, you are always so sympathetic!" said Amelia, a little mockery in her voice. "If I were a man," she added scornfully, "I would n't sympathize with women."

"What would you do?" asked Seppy curiously.

"I 'd go round with a club," replied Amelia fiercely.

Later on Seppy had been sent into the library to entertain H. Simms. John and Amelia dis-

covered him there, vainly endeavoring to make himself agreeable to a stout woman of forty-five with a blustering and rather patronizing manner —what a school for journalists describes in its prospectus as "an assured manner," and undertakes to teach in twelve lessons. ("Mention this advertisement!")

H. Simms was the sort of woman the average man would run a mile to avoid meeting. She was so abnormally stout, so unnecessarily aggressive, so absurdly like a fat man in petticoats—but for the fact that a man's weight is nearer to earth. She had such an unnaturally deep voice that it disturbed one's nerves; when she interviewed a man, he would say *anything* in order to get it over. So many women of that type and age secure positions on daily papers. Perhaps they scare the editors.

John could imagine her writing some such gossipy paragraph as this: "I met Lord Algy Torkum at the Royal Garden Party on Wednesday. Everyone one knows was there. 'Jinks'—Lord Algy is always 'Jinks' to his intimates—told me a rather naughty story which I can't refrain from telling you. It was about a fascinating revue star, who, by the way, tells me that she has—" And so forth.

Her skirt was too long where it should have been short, and too short where it should have been long, perfectly cut, but badly put on. Her

coat was tight—too tight—and her hat hard and hideously unbecoming. Her manner was that of an autocrat. Her class was shown by her devotion to buttered toast, strong tea with sugar in it, and the novels of Miss Marie Corelli. She preferred muffins "nice and juicy"—with heaps of butter; but one must suffer for the sake of the war. In her spare time she produced columns of "Economical Recipes" containing dozens of eggs and quarts of cream. As a majority of her readers had never seen a quart of cream in one jug, they were immensely flattered at the implication that cream in such quantities was their customary allowance. She was kind to her mother.

"Excuse me!" inquired H. Simms. "Mr. Wynn?"

"How do you do?" said John.

"I represent the *Morning Megaphone,*" said H. Simms. It was an unnecessary remark. On seeing H. Simms one naturally thought of the *Morning Megaphone.*

"I did n't know you were a woman," explained Amelia, a little tactlessly, John thought. He himself was n't certain, but he had concealed the fact.

"I 'm the *M. M.'s* star reporter," announced H. Simms, taking out a note-book to refresh her memory. She had interviewed many celebrities

in her time, and had occasionally mixed them up in her copy. She was celebrated in Fleet Street for having on one occasion given the credit of an epigram of Mr. Horatio Bottomley's to Mr. Bernard Shaw. She had interviewed both gentlemen on the same day, so there was some excuse for this unfortunate slip of the pen.

"You have met my wife—and Colonel Packinder?" inquired John politely.

"I have met Colonel Packinder at the Press Bureau," replied H. Simms grimly. "I used a quotation from Kipling's 'Recessional'—'The captains and the kings depart'—in a descriptive article, and Colonel Packinder made me cut out 'captains' and 'kings,' lest it should give information to the enemy."

"I consider that episode has been grossly exaggerated," protested Seppy huffily.

"It could n't be," replied the lady journalist drily.

"What can I do for you, Miss Simms?" asked John.

H. Simms sat down, crossed her legs, and glanced through her notes. "Was there anything you objected to in the prison system?" she inquired, moistening her pencil absent-mindedly. It was an indelible pencil—she afterward wondered why everybody stared at her in the train.

John lit a cigarette and offered the box to the

interviewer, who took one mechanically. "There is one very great deprivation the prisoners have to suffer," he explained, with an ironical gravity that completely escaped the lady's notice. "They are forbidden to take the *Morning Megaphone*." He shook his head sadly. "How can their minds expand and their moral tone develop, when they are denied the offices of our most popular newspaper?"

"That 's a very good point," said H. Simms, impervious to irony.

John, thus encouraged, continued in the same vein. "Another thing! It is very distressing for a man unaccustomed to early rising to be compelled to get up—without any early tea, mind you! —in the small hours of the morning, and to be expected to retire before it is dark. It does n't tend to make him contented with his surroundings. Why, even the conscientious objectors are permitted to subscribe to their favorite organs of public opinion!" he added, with the kind of indignation that finds an outlet in the correspondence columns of the daily press.

H. Simms chronicled the indignation, but failed to observe the twinkle that accompanied it.

"Well, Mr. Wynn," she remarked, "the *Morning Megaphone* is prepared to pay you a shilling a word for the sole serial rights of your story—

to be published in instalments—with photographs."

John smiled. It was extremely kind of the *Morning Megaphone.*

"I have the contract here; it only needs your signature," said H. Simms, depositing a document on the table.

"I have no desire to contribute to the hilarity of the British breakfast-table," protested John.

H. Simms looked up quickly. "Have you been offered better terms?" she asked.

John shook his head. "It is n't a question of good terms, but of good taste," he said.

"Any reasonable man would prefer doubtful taste at a shilling a word to fastidiousness at a guinea a column," argued the journalist.

"I dislike publicity," John protested.

"My dear sir! Publicity is what everyone is trying to obtain. We offer it to you—at a profit," explained H. Simms.

"Perhaps, John, for the sake of our children—" suggested Amelia. Like most women, she entertained a certain amount of awe and respect for the press. To have seen something in the paper was to have insured its reliability.

"For the sake of our children," replied John quietly, "I would rather the whole episode were forgotten."

"Impossible!" cried H. Simms. "It 's too good

a story! The press will be black with it to-morrow. A great wrong has been done you, Mr. Wynn, and it 's the business of the press to see that such a thing does n't occur again."

"I realize that the press is the watch-dog of the nation," murmured John.

H. Simms became practical. "The *Morning Megaphone* will give you one and threepence a word and free insurance, not only against hostile aircraft, but against our own anti-aircraft guns," she announced.

"Hang it all, sir!" cried Seppy, "those are deuced generous terms. You 've only got to slang the government sufficiently hard, and they 'll create a new department and make you its permanent head. There are still the Ritz and the Carlton and the Piccadilly waiting to be commandeered. Personally, I should choose the Ritz."

One of John's chief disappointments on returning to life was to hear that Sir William Gilbert had passed away; but he was delighted to realize that the Gilbertian spirit still flourished, particularly in departmental administration. "Is the country run entirely on Gilbertian lines?" he inquired innocently.

"The country is run on the lines laid down by my editor," replied H. Simms promptly.

John contemplated the idea of emigration. He

had come back, expecting to creep into a quiet corner, but he found himself welcomed by the brass band of the press—to-day's sensation until to-morrow's knocked him from his pedestal.

"You 're good for three weeks—unless peace is declared," announced H. Simms. "And the *Morning Megaphone* has no intention of allowing peace to be declared until the nation has had most of its habits upset."

"I 'm sorry you had to wait so long," said John, rising.

"Oh, that 's all right!" replied H. Simms, pocketing her note-book and taking the hint. "But about that story," she added, handing him the document she had thrown on the table. "Here is the agreement for you to sign. We must prepare the public for your revelations. We 've got to start by telling them what we are paying you; that always impresses them. Money talks, Mr. Wynn, louder every day. Even the *Morning Megaphone* is double its original price and gives half its original reading matter. A celebrity is made by advertisement, and a newspaper by advertisements. Good evening!"

H. Simms habitually bowed herself out with an attempt at epigram. She had been taught this at the school for journalists. She walked to the station feeling very pleased with herself. She was the kind of woman who drew vitality from

the people she came in contact with. What exhausted her victims refreshed her. One can tell the true egotist by his or her vampire-like quality.

"It 's funny she never married," said John, tearing the agreement into spills.

"Good Lord, Wynn," cried Seppy, "you 're destroying the contract!"

"What did you expect me to do with it?" asked John.

CHAPTER XVIII

An hour, once sped, that ne'er can be recalled,
O Love! If that same hour could be prolonged
Through all eternity, it would be too short!

Pro Patria, Act 4.

JOHN was one of those men who believed in progress, but not in vulgarity; in publicity, but not in advertisement; in the freedom of the press, but not in pandering to the public appetite for sensation. "You won't get anything if you take that line," Seppy had remarked reproachfully; but John wanted nothing but leave to reconstruct his life without undue interference. It might be much simpler to go with the crowd and to think as they did, for a minority had always been unpopular; but was not popularity the requiem of moral and intellectual development? One had but to read popular authors, to listen to popular politicians and publicists, to realize that one took away nothing but eyewash, bunkum, dope. There were a number of people in the country who went about distributing eyewash in barrels to a credulous public, a public who wanted eyewash and were not satisfied until they got it. The hatred

of truth was a disease from which the majority were suffering.

When a man came along who told the truth, the majority immediately conspired to squash him, to silence him, and to warn others who might endeavor to follow in his footsteps. Novels of sticky sentimentality, with heroes of the "This style 27s. 6d." brand vied in popularity with those of the newer school—weak imitations of *La Comédie Humaine* without the genius—novels that indulged in intimate revelations of the passions, animal chiefly, of dull and uninteresting members of the lower middle class, novels steeped in "sex interest," that discussed in detail the physical results of propinquity, and reveled in lurid passages of overdone reticence concerning the thoughts, temptations, and desires of semi-decadent young men who meditated, and occasionally indulged in, nocturnal excursions to the attics where servant girls of a coming-on disposition were accustomed to take their rest. The public considered this to be realism of a wonderful kind, and the books in question were read largely by childless women and middle-aged maiden ladies. Novelists of intelligence who told the truth without hiding it in a purple handkerchief were considered "shocking"; but the newer school writers dressed up their offerings, not to shock or to warn, but to appeal to the public's worst in-

stincts. "Suggestion" was the dominant note in the plays presented in those early days of the war, particularly in those amazing medleys of tinkling tunes and inanities called "revues." A straight play had small chance of getting a hearing. "We want to be amused," was the cry; and the public had been educated to find amusement only in bad taste and to laugh only at obvious suggestiveness. The press either set or followed the tone of the nation. A few papers tried to set it, but the majority were content to follow, either to save trouble or in answer to urgent "memos" from the managers of the advertising departments.

Why were the majority of our great criminals so often exceptionally able men? Because they had brains, and, realizing that brains were of very little use in the majority of professions, they had adopted a career of crime in order to avoid intellectual inertia. If a few score of our brilliant criminals, thought John, could change places with an equal number of our abnormally conscientious Cabinet Ministers, the result would be electrifying for England. An expert criminal does not whitewash a comrade who has made a mess of his job; he kicks him out. He realizes that a muddler is a danger to the profession. But a statesman who blundered was sent to the House of Lords,

which was the finest reformatory in the world for living down an asinine past.

John was neither a criminal nor a Cabinet Minister, and he had no desire for popularity. He merely wished to be let alone to enjoy himself in the bosom of his exceptionally charming family. But Arthur, his son—

"I have tried to do my duty to our children," Amelia had said. "Arthur is not a coward, but his prospects—"

"Would any man in England *have* any prospects—if every man thought of his own?" John had replied. He realized that Arthur must have courage to walk down Whitehall in civilian clothes at his age.

Arthur had married, against his father's wishes. John was determined that no amount of sentimentality should interfere with his firmness of purpose.

A little later Jimmy burst into the room. "They are just coming up the drive," he informed Amelia. "Jordan biffed on ahead to warn us. I say, I sha'n't have to kiss the bride, shall I?"

Jordan followed him into the room, his manner a little apologetic. The American genius for speech-making came to his assistance. He wished to express his regret for assisting Arthur to set their wishes at defiance; but as Arthur had done him the honor to ask his assistance, he could not

very well have refused. And, at the same time, he had deeply appreciated the privilege of being associated so intimately with such an auspicious event in the history of a family he had learned to love and admire.

"Hear, hear! And so forth!" exclaimed Jimmy, considerably bored.

Amelia came to the rescue. "I am glad you were able to help him, Mr. Jordan," she said.

"It was an honor," repeated Jordan, after explaining the details of the ceremony and how it had happened that he had been called in to take part in it. He had taken it all very seriously. After the wedding was an accomplished fact, Arthur had repaid him with a casual "Thanks awf'ly!" and Chloe had shaken his hand warmly and shown her gratitude. Jordan, full of "uplift" on account of a very vital decision he had made, had thrown himself heart and soul into sympathy with the young couple and had omitted to talk of his own affairs or of the decision in question, much as he longed to do so. But American men, in spite of being prolific conversationists, are, as a rule, far better and far more sympathetic listeners than the average Englishman can even pretend to be.

"Sir," said Jordan, solemnly turning to John, "I should like to speak to you as the head of your family!"

John looked at Amelia quaintly. "Am I the head of my family?" he asked.

"I hope so, John," she replied quietly.

"Well, Mr. Jordan?" said John.

Jordan was a little embarrassed; he felt rather self-conscious. He had done a very sporting thing, and—he felt strangely like an Englishman; that is to say, rather ashamed of acknowledging it.

"Mr. Rattigan has given me permission to apply for a commission in the Flying Corps," he announced. "I can't afford the time to go home to train in the United States; that's why I am joining the British army."

Their reception of the news was all that could be desired. John congratulated him heartily, Amelia looked at him nervously, Jimmy whistled admiringly, and Olive drew a quick breath. Jordan went on to explain that Mr. Rattigan had considerable influence with the powers that be, that the question of nationality was to be overlooked, America now being an ally, and that he had been told that the commission would be granted almost immediately, as Jordan's well-known powers of organization and his ability for getting things done had impressed themselves on the mandarins of Whitehall. America was coming to the assistance of the old country in more ways than one; she was sending men, money, and

munitions, and she was lending some of her best brains. Perhaps, after the war, the obstinate stupidity of George III and his followers, and the unstatesmanlike folly and cupidity of British rulers during the long tragedy of the early sixties, would be forgotten; perhaps the American dislike of British stupidity and conservatism, and the British jealousy of American success, would fade into obscurity and the two nations march in step toward the ultimate goal of democratic freedom. It was a thrilling thought.

"I should like your permission, sir, to pay my addresses to your daughter," said Jordan.

"To *me?*" gasped Olive.

"Surely," replied Jordan, slightly bewildered.

"But I thought—that is, I thought you were—that you came here on mother's account," stammered Olive.

Jordan looked at her steadily. "Why, no! It was you all the time," he said. "It has never been anyone but you."

Olive, perplexed, turned to her mother. "But I 'm sure mother thought—didn't you, mother?"

"Nonsense!" said Amelia calmly. "Mr. Jordan has been charming, but—I always knew *why.*"

This was not strictly true. Most men of her acquaintance had ben in love with Amelia at some time or another. She had appreciated their de-

votion, enjoyed their companionship, accepted their attentions; but she had taken it all for what it was worth. A normal woman with a grown-up daughter could scarcely be expected to go out of her way to avoid receiving admiration.

Olive had taken it all with admirable philosophy. If a man preferred her mother's society, why should n't he indulge his preference? Olive had her girl friends to fall back upon. That she was a little in love with Jordan she did not attempt to deny; that she was on the verge of caring very deeply for him was a fact she had been compelled to face; that the odds against his ever caring for her in that way had been fifty to one was a thought constantly in her mind. So, being a healthy-minded girl, she had let things drift and enjoyed herself to the best of her ability. But now that he was going to join up, to risk his life hourly, daily—the more she felt a thing, the less she showed it.

"It is my intention to persuade Miss Olive to marry me at once—if I am lucky enough to win her regard," said Jordan.

"You are so old-fashioned in everything but business!" exclaimed Olive.

"I hope, sir, that you have no objection?" asked Jordan.

"My dear fellow," replied John, "if Olive thinks as you do—"

"Why, of course, father!" protested Olive calmly. "Would any girl refuse to marry a man in the Flying Corps?"

"I am very sensible of the honor you are doing me in allowing me to enter your family," continued Jordan ceremoniously.

"My dear Jordan," said John, catching the spirit of the occasion, "we are proud to welcome an ally!"

"Sir," replied Jordan, squaring his shoulders, "I am proud to be an ally!"

Seppy, with a desire to be in the picture and an incurable longing to have a finger in every pie, stepped forward and held out his hand. "My dear fellow!" he exclaimed, "we shall be proud to welcome you in the British army; and, as an old soldier, let me be the first to tell you so."

"Thank you, Colonel," replied Jordan, taking his proffered hand.

Jimmy summed up the situation rather neatly. "This ought to make Arthur feel a bit sick," he remarked.

Olive was not going to be robbed of her perquisites. "Father," she asked, "*what* was it that Mr. Jordan wanted permission to do?"

John chuckled. "To pay his addresses to *you*," he replied gravely.

"Does that mean you want to propose to me?" inquired Olive, looking at Jordan meaningly.

"Sure," said Jordan.

"Right-ho!" replied Olive, looking at her wrist-watch. "And after that I must go and fish out a photograph of myself for the war brides' page in the *Morning Megaphone!*"

"But you have n't accepted him yet," John protested.

"I should like to see my pictures in all the papers," said Olive. "It 's half the fun of being a war bride."

"I guess we 'd better hurry along that proposal," suggested Jordan impatiently.

"I say," interpolated Jimmy, "I *should* like to hear old Jordan proposing. May I come too?"

Jordan smiled—a large, unrationed smile. "Nothing doing, Jimmy," he replied.

"Oh, come along!" cried Olive, taking her lover's arm. "Your last train goes at eleven."

Why is it that, when you are supremely happy, there is always a last train to catch, or some form of the sword of Damocles hanging over your head? If you are engaged, one or the other has to go, and the hours fly so quickly, while to-morrow seems an eternity away. If you are married, there are relations to placate, old family friends to pacify, callers to entertain, work to be done; and the world always on the threshold. There are times when one prays for the world to pause, other times when one longs for it to hasten. Is heaven just the state of being happy

with those one loves, with no yesterday to deplore, no to-morrow to dread? Or is it a state in which one has no regrets and no fears?

To Olive and Jordan the evening passed much too quickly, but they made the most of it; yet Olive could not get a picture out of her head—Victoria Station, and the leave-train waiting to carry her lover to Folkestone; and, after that, the dread of the sight of a telegraph messenger; long, lonely days, and still more lonely nights, when fear sat by the window; and passionate rebellion against the political ambitions of kings and ministers that brought suffering and sorrow to wives and mothers.

That night there was "nothing to report" on the western front; but men died suddenly, and others were carried back to the casualty clearing stations, shattered, crippled, and the wires flashed the news to those who were waiting, to those who had lived in a kind of dream, dreading the news that might come.

And the royal megalomaniac held conferences with "the old German god" and issued his instructions for support.

Olive and Jordan said good-by near the gates. In a wood below a nightingale was singing. How beautiful the world could be!

Jordan missed his train and had to walk to Rickmansworth.

CHAPTER XIX

Son: If you would but pay the cost?
Reformer: What then?
Son: I can retain the post. It suits me.
Reformer: It will leave me bankrupt.
Son: Too bad!

Pro Patria, Act 2.

ARTHUR and Chloe had enjoyed rather an eventful day. Arthur had spent the morning occupied in the British sport of wangling, leaving Chloe to make some necessary purchases, having arranged to meet her at the Carlton Grill Room at half-past twelve. He pulled wires, drew some money from the bank, procured his special license, secured a couple of days' leave "on urgent private affairs," and telephoned to Jordan to be at the Carlton Grill Room at twelve-thirty. The three had partaken of an excellent lunch, and had then taken a taxicab to a church where the vicar, an old friend of Arthur's, had duly married them, Jordan acting as best man, and a friend of Chloe's—a well-known suffragist who had suffered imprisonment and forcible feeding in 1913, who wept copiously all through the service—arriving in the nick of time to attend the bride. They taxied to the Ritz for tea, Chloe

fingering her wedding-ring with some awe, and Arthur had telephoned both to Chenies and to Chalfont. Jordan excused himself and went straight to Chalfont; the suffragist friend of the bride stayed on for another half-hour, longing to find an excuse for her departure, but much too shy to invent one. Finally Arthur had given her an opportunity to remember a mythical engagement, and she had made a hurried exit.

The young couple spent a pleasant hour going over some flats that were to let, the rents of which averaged some four hundred pounds a year. These flats were small and not particularly convenient, but they were in the right streets and squares—which made up for a good deal. They finally secured the refusal of a charming flat in Knightsbridge, and, after an early dinner at the Piccadilly Grill Room, took a cab to Baker Street, and reached Chalfont about nine o'clock.

Amelia welcomed them warmly, though a trifle tearfully. John was very polite and rather amused.

"How do you reconcile this haste with your common-sense logic?" he asked.

Chloe explained that it was the essence of common sense to do what you wanted first and to argue about it afterward. She insisted, much to his embarrassment, on kissing her youthful

brother-in-law. She had quite a delightful sense of humor.

Jimmy escaped, and for some weeks was a confirmed misogynist.

"Did you expect me to be overcome by the sentiment proper to the occasion and to present you with a large check?" inquired John.

Chloe smiled. "Very few people are sentimental where money is concerned—outside the theater," she replied.

Seppy was full of sentiment, overflowing with little remarks proper to the occasion. "I hope you will allow *me* to wish you happiness?" he exclaimed.

"Thanks, old man!" said Arthur, rather bored by the whole atmosphere.

"Oh, Arthur!" cried Amelia. Her mouth was quivering, and her eyes full of tears. It is rather an event in the life of a mother when she welcomes her son's wife; she has some excuse for being emotional. But the average son is a little unresponsive to emotion, and perhaps it is just as well.

"That 's all right, mother!" he protested kindly. "Don't let 's have a scene!"

"We shall have to go home and explain things to mother," said Chloe; "if we hurry, we shall get there just after father has had his second whisky-and-soda. He 's always more philosophic

on two whiskies-and-sodas than he is on a ration breakfast."

"You might tell Collins to get the car out," suggested Arthur to Jimmy.

"All right," replied Jimmy. "I say, father! Are you going to fork out an allowance for them?" he inquired.

John explained that he would have much pleasure in doing so after Arthur had been gazetted.

"That 's one on him!" exclaimed Jimmy, chuckling. "You won't catch old Arthur leaving the F.O.; he 's too jolly comfortable!"

It was at this point that Chloe had her revenge on the discomfited Harrovian, who retired in disorder.

"You see," Arthur explained, "it would mean teaching another man my job—which would upset the routine."

"Arthur has thought of a much better plan than that," said Chloe.

"You said, sir, that you would n't mind if only *one* member of our family had joined up, and I quite see your point." Arthur took out his cigarette-case, selected a cigarette with some care, tapped it against the arm of his chair, lighted it, and deposited the match on an ash-tray. "I quite see your point," he repeated, blowing smoke through his nose and smiling affably. "I saw my chief and explained the situation, and he explained

it to *his* chief, who explained it to the Foreign Secretary, who passed it on to the Prime Minister, who had a word with the War Office; and the result is—" He flicked the ash from his cigarette. "The result is, they have consented to offer *you* a commission."

There was complete silence for a moment, broken by a gasp from Amelia.

"Arthur!" she protested.

"So, you see, there will be at least *one* of us in the army," concluded this master of diplomacy with some satisfaction.

John looked at his son. "My dear Arthur!" he exclaimed: "As a diplomat you will go far. I congratulate you!"

"Don't you think it was a brilliant idea?" said Chloe.

"It was worthy of the source from which it came," replied John.

Amelia was shocked. "Arthur!" she cried again reproachfully.

"My dear!" said John gently; "we shall only embarrass our son!"

But in that he was guilty of exaggeration. Arthur did not appear in the least embarrassed. It was a master stroke of policy; it was worthy of the future Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

"May I inquire to what regiment I am to be gazetted?" inquired John politely.

"You are to be an assistant A.P.M.—an Assistant Provost Marshal," replied Arthur. "It 's a very important job!" he added, with the air of a dispenser of favors.

"What are the duties of an A.P.M.?" asked John.

"You will have to walk about the West End and see that the old dug-outs in staff jobs get plenty of salutes, and that an officer does n't walk down Piccadilly with his hands in his pockets or wearing fancy socks. Is n't that it, Seppy?" inquired Arthur.

"More or less," agreed Seppy. "More or less."

"But I want to help to win the war," protested John.

"The observance of strict military etiquette by temporary soldiers is bound to win it—in time," replied Arthur. "Of course, if you would rather have a political job, I 'll see what can be done," he added graciously.

"No, thank you, Arthur!" said his father; "I 'd rather win the war by walking than by talking."

Though, candidly, he scarcely relished the notion of being compelled to teach men from the trenches how to become soldiers, and he disliked the idea of being the fly in the ointment as far

as the enjoyment of a man-on-leave in London was concerned. It was rather like being an assistant master at a mixed school. The whole thing was grotesque. It was like Arthur to suggest it. But he swallowed his indignation. After all, the notion was distinctly humorous.

"You 'll accept the commission?" said Arthur.

"Naturally!" replied his father.

After all, it would give him a chance to serve his country—and at the same time to get back his perspective on things. His country had robbed him of a quarter of his life, but somehow it would be pleasant to repay that act of robbery by service, however humble.

"Don't worry, my dear!" he said to Amelia, who was feeling for her handkerchief; "they are not going to put me in the front line."

"I think it 's splendid of you to want to serve your country—after the way you have been treated," said Chloe, biting her lip and looking at Arthur with rather unfriendly eyes. She felt curiously ashamed.

"I hope I shall prove an efficient substitute for my son," replied John, with gentle irony.

Arthur coughed, and crushed his cigarette. "With reference to that allowance you were speaking of," he suggested.

John chuckled. "I shall look upon it as lagniappe for getting me my commission."

"Oh, that 's all right!" said Arthur coolly. "Glad to do it for you!"

"I hope they will make me a major," mused his father. "I somehow fancy myself as a major: he is more human than a captain and less ratty than a colonel. He is the link between the dug-out and the digger. You might remember that, Arthur, when you are wangling my promotion."

"I 'll mention it to my chief," replied Arthur.

"Do you think there 's any chance of our being happy?" said Chloe to Amelia, as Arthur was cranking up the car that was to bear them to Chenies. Amelia squeezed her hand. It was the only reply she could make. Could any woman be happy with such an egotist as Arthur had proved himself to be? "I suggested Arthur's getting Mr. Wynn that commission as a joke, thinking he would feel a little ashamed," continued Chloe; "and he took it seriously."

"My dear Chloe!" said John, overhearing her remark. "We are ruled by men who take jokes seriously, and serious things as a joke."

Chloe pondered the question. If they had children, how could she ever explain to them why their father would n't fight?

She kissed Amelia, and seated herself in the car. She was very silent during the drive. "We shall be able to take that flat," remarked Arthur, skilfully avoiding a belated pedestrian. Chloe

sighed. A little of the gilt had already been rubbed off the frame.

On arriving at Chenies, Lady Gratham cried a little and Lord Gratham blustered. They were easily pacified.

The newly married couple drove up to town and spent the night at the Ritz, where they had taken rooms.

It is sometimes profitable to be an "indispensable."

They spent the next day in buying furniture—for John had sent them a generous check, which arrived during breakfast by special messenger.

A couple of hundred miles away the barrage had lifted and men were going over the top. The casualty list was heavy, but some ground was gained.

Arthur and Chloe, however, were endeavoring to resist the temptation to furnish the drawing-room in satinwood.

That night, as they dined at the Ritz, Arthur having glanced at an evening paper, remarked: "I see we 've lost a trench."

"Have we?" replied Chloe. "You know, Arthur, satinwood is expensive, but it does last!"

"I know," said Arthur. "Let 's go and see George Robey at the Alhambra!"

CHAPTER XX

Lesbia: I want him to go.
Reformer: Then I will tell him to.
Lesbia: No; you would be too brutal. I will make him think he has offered to renounce me. He will feel a hero.

Pro Patria, Act 2.

"AMELIA!" said John, after the bridal couple had been whirled away, "that boy is a prig and a fool!"

Yes, he knew she had tried to do her duty to their children; but the only way to treat a boy like that was to apply physical force to that part of his anatomy so carefully provided by nature for the purpose.

Seppy agreed with him. Seppy's code was old-fashioned in some things. He was an egotist, too; but there were limits beyond which egotism should not go. At any rate, there were occasions on which egotism should be camouflaged.

"May I ask whether I shall have to salute *you* when I am an A.P.M.?" inquired John genially. "Because, if so, it would perhaps be wiser to have a little chat before I render myself liable to be shot at dawn for undisciplinary conduct toward my superior officer."

Seppy looked at him anxiously. He hoped the fellow was not going to make a scene. A scene would be so out of place in this charming atmosphere. He fidgeted uncomfortably. It was difficult to understand whether John was in earnest.

"You and I are both in love with my wife," said John.

Amelia was startled; she looked up from her place by the tea-tray. She always had a pot of China tea brought in at ten o'clock. The men could indulge in whiskies-and-sodas if they wished to, and they usually did; but for Amelia tea was the only night-cap. It was a gentle stimulant, but a soothing one. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who when in doubt taxed tea, was cordially disliked by the women of England.

"John," she cried, "you never *said* you were in love with me!"

"My dear! I thought it was obvious," he protested.

Amelia bit her lip. "You mean you took it for granted that I should still—care for you?"

"No," replied John; "I take nothing for granted."

The man who takes nothing for granted is frequently called a cynic; but some men are born with the craze for analysis and the desire to reason things out for themselves. Through them and their kind the world progresses. Some men

fly to a dictionary for explanations, while others prove them by experience.

"As I am the host," added John, a little grimly, "I should like our friend to have the first innings."

"You 're only half serious," protested Amelia indignantly.

"I am in deadly earnest," said John. "But I understand that he has been such a good friend to you."

"I have been her devoted friend for twelve years," cried Seppy. "I have no wish to give up the privilege."

Amelia sighed. "I am very grateful for all you have done for us, Seppy," she murmured.

John chuckled. "That sounds uncommonly like 'Cease fire!' When a woman expresses her gratitude for all your attention and sympathy, it usually means that she has had enough of it."

"Does it mean that, Amelia?" inquired Seppy reproachfully.

Amelia wanted to be kind, but she wanted still more to be definite. The time for letting things slide was over. "Much as I appreciate your company, Seppy, you never made me forget my husband," she said.

"Amelia!" protested Seppy, with a catch in his voice. "I loved you!"

If a woman cannot have the man she wants, she frequently drugs herself by accepting the devo-

tion of the man who wants *her*. It may be selfish and a little inconsiderate to the man concerned; but, on the other hand, in this particular instance, if Seppy had not devoted himself to Amelia, he might have become entangled with some woman who was not at all desirable.

"At least, I have done you no harm," she protested.

"I refuse to be cast off like a last year's gown," asserted Seppy, with some emphasis.

"Last year's gowns are not cast off," said John; "they are made over."

"To think I have known you all these years without knowing you at all!" groaned Seppy. He fidgeted nervously with the ash-tray and spilt its contents on the floor, then absent-mindedly stamped the ash into the rug. His self-respect, his pride, his vanity—all the little aids that gave him his poise—were protesting against the blow he had received. "Does a man ever really know what a woman is thinking?" he cried.

"Does she fool him, or does he fool himself? That is the point," said John.

Seppy sighed. Women were so rarely direct. They corkscrewed, like a winding staircase, where a man would go up in the lift. Women were not subtle; they were merely secretive. Even as a boy, Seppy had discovered that women were difficult to understand; that was why he found

them so attractive. A man never knew where he was with them. They pretended to be enjoying themselves, when in reality they were bored stiff! They said they did n't want a thing, when they were actually pining for it. They admired glorious scenery, and assumed enthusiasm over a Bach string quartette, for instance; and all the time they were wondering whether their hats were at the right angle, and why some other woman wore pink when blue was her color. Their minds rioted through a thousand subjects before a man had had time to digest one. They drank coffee after port, and ate ices at all hours of the day and night. They admired some beastly romantic actor, or a fat tenor, neither of whom had ever been drilled or had any pretensions to smartness. They had moods of depression, of contradiction, of penitence—the penitent mood was very attractive—or high spirits when conscious of looking their best; but when once you had succumbed to the attraction, you found the society of men very tame and ordinary.

Seppy sighed again. He remembered his school-days, the subtle stuffy aroma of class-rooms, the academic pedantry of the classical masters, the fevered craze for athletic supremacy; the quaint mixture of the prig, the glutton, and the explorer that was in every boy; the confidential talks that usually concluded in horse-play;

the refined cruelty of the school-boy in his dealings with a nervous master; all the dull, dreary monotony of public-school life. Sandhurst had been little more than a glorified public school, and the army itself was scarcely any different. Either you possessed the school-boy mind and spirit, and gave all your spare time to hunting, shooting, or polo, or you found yourself unutterably bored both in mess and out of it. Brains were tabu, cleverness was distrusted. Seppy looked back upon a somewhat empty record, the brightest spots in which had been filled by women. He had always been decent to women, and women had usually been decent to him. He had never had a great passion; he had never let himself go; he had attached himself to a few women at various stages of his career—one at a time. He had given all his devotion, and had asked for nothing in return. Men called him "Poor old Seppy!" as though they were saying "Good dog!" And now Amelia was thanking him for past favors while her husband gently and ironically chaffed him.

Seppy looked very sad and forlorn as he sat reflecting on these things; he looked so like a toy balloon that had been pricked that Amelia felt rather guilty.

"I 'm sorry if you feel that I have n't treated you properly," she murmured.

"Oh, please!" protested Seppy. But, in spite of his protest, he was beginning to feel that he had been made a convenience of. One could not deny it. He had placed his heart in Amelia's keeping, and she had used it as a paper-weight—to keep her receipts in order, as a taxicab whistle, as an army and navy stores catalogue.

Some men are rather like an army and navy stores catalogue; they possess a little of everything, and everything is labeled. Seppy was one of them.

"My dear Colonel," said John, a little cruelly, "some men would never be loved at all if it was n't for their usefulness. A knowledge of Bradshaw and the best restaurants is of far more value in a husband than a Grecian profile. Is n't it, Amelia?" he added, turning to his wife.

"A woman admires a man for his looks; she adores him for his brains," said Amelia.

"Women are materialists; did n't you know that?" inquired John.

Seppy had placed women on a pedestal—Amelia in particular. He hated being compelled to listen to remarks derogatory to women. He remembered moments when he had seen a wonderful far-away look in Amelia's eyes, as though all the secrets and mysteries of the world had been unfolding themselves to her. He would

swear that she had not been thinking of brains then.

John would have said she was probably working out the details of a new frock. Men can be very irritating at times; their humor does not always strike the psychological moment.

"When you tell me that women are materialists, I can't help feeling very disappointed, for men, too, are materialists," protested Seppy.

"Nonsense," replied John. "Men are idealists, dreamers, unpractical, creatures of impulse, changeable, easily petted, easily soothed, easily roused, swift to anger, slow to forgive, full of contradictions, full of little vices and of big virtues."

"John is quite right," interrupted Amelia. "The more I study boys, the more I understand men."

"Your children think you understand very little," cried Seppy.

"Children always think their parents a little slow in the uptake," replied John. "Some parents encourage the notion. The fact is that no one is as wise as he thinks he is, nor as foolish as he appears."

"Do I appear foolish to you, Amelia?" inquired Seppy, a trifle overcome at the idea.

"Not more than most men do at times," replied Amelia.

John chuckled. The thrust had pierced Seppy's guard, and his own as well. Women were expert fencers, and rarely used buttoned foils.

"You must n't give up dropping into dinner," said Amelia. "I 'm sure John won't mind."

The scene was not panning out as Seppy had planned it. He was beginning to realize how a leading actor must feel when he has to renounce leading rôles and assume those of secondary importance, when there would no longer be an "and" before his name, when he would no longer be greeted with a round of applause, when his opinions on questions of the day would no longer be sought by journalists anxious to fill a column. He began to visualize himself standing with his back to the club fireplace and beginning anecdotes with the words "I remember." Such an attitude is a milestone in the life of a man: it means that he can no longer look forward, but must from that time on exist in the past. It would be worse than having a seat offered to him by a young man in a crowded train—if a young man of such amazing courtesy had by some error strayed into London.

He would not submit—not without a struggle. He would apply for a job on active service; not that there was very much chance of his getting one, but it would soothe his self-respect to apply for it. Besides, he would mention the fact that

he had applied for it to sundry acquaintances at his various clubs. His friends would call him a sport, and some of the members of the softer sex might label him a hero. He was saluted by all and sundry in Pall Mall and Whitehall; but in his heart he realized that he was nothing but a dug-out. He was drawing consolidated pay, and he wore red tabs; but he had only been brought back to take the place of a younger man who was wanted for service overseas. His step would never be quite so jaunty again; he had outlived his usefulness. Amelia was asking him to dinner because she was sorry for him, not because she desired his company. John did not even fear him as a rival. He had been too modest, too easily satisfied. And now he was getting old; he felt he was getting old. He helped himself to a second whisky-and-soda. He needed bucking up.

John was beginning to realize that he would grow quite fond of Seppy in time. But he was a man, and consequently an individualist, and therefore distinctly averse to sharing with Seppy either his house or his wife's affection. He handed a box of cigarettes to his visitor with the remark: "These are yours, I believe!"

Seppy took the box. "I am not going to give in without a struggle," he protested, his second whisky-and-soda having started on the process of bucking him up.

"Quite right!" replied John approvingly. He was anxious that Seppy should go and do his struggling somewhere else. He realized that when a woman is taking a tender farewell she liked to prolong the agony and to talk over every phase of it. John, being a man, preferred to get it over without any unnecessary delay. "I want the position thoroughly understood before you become my superior officer."

"I think you are a little inconsiderate," said Amelia.

John realized the truth of her remark, but, having decided on his policy, he was determined to see it through. Seppy had to be sacrificed, so it would be wiser to get it over. Amelia must forget Seppy's little ways of doing things that were an improvement on John's; and the sooner she forgot them, the happier they would both be. If Seppy felt aggrieved, he could take it out on his subalterns.

"I am the last person to insist on my rights at another man's expense," asserted Seppy.

"No man of any decent feeling considers another man's rights where his own prejudices are concerned," replied John with mock-gravity.

Amelia tried to pour oil on the troubled waters. "There will be a place laid for you at lunch every Sunday," she announced.

Seppy hesitated. After all, it would be very

pleasant to have a haven of rest to come down to after the worries of Whitehall; and if he could not make love to Amelia, he could remember past privileges. He still possessed some of the sentimentality of the nineteenth century, but at the same time he had acquired a reasonable percentage of the hedonistic tendencies of the twentieth. Personal comforts were not to be despised. There were even compensations in being a bachelor.

The second whisky-and-soda was doing its work well. John's subsequent remark "There 's life in the old dog yet" was distinctly brutal, but perfectly true. Seppy was a soldier; he admitted a reverse, but never a defeat.

"He will visualize his blighted hopes in every glass of port he drinks," murmured John, after Seppy had hurried off to catch the last train back to town. "He will see himself as the elderly bachelor of Victorian fiction, nursing a broken heart, and it will buck him up like anything."

It did.

CHAPTER XXI

Credit a woman's deeds but not her words.
Pro Patria, Act 4.

JOHN reflected on what he had accomplished in the comparatively few hours that had elapsed since he had been released from prison. He had encouraged his daughter to follow the instincts of her own heart, and she was now engaged in saying a protracted farewell to her acknowledged lover. He had protested against his elder son's refusal to join the army, and he had been tricked into granting that diplomatic young schemer an allowance. He would have to send Arthur a check in the morning as a proof of his defeat. Political methods always scored. Jimmy appeared to have accepted him as a decent sort of parent. He was gradually assuming the position of master in his own house. Amelia, his wife, was not to be won so easily. She had taken up a book, and was turning over the pages without realizing their meaning. Of what was she thinking? Was she angry with him for his attitude toward Seppy, for his attitude toward her generally? Had he taken too much for granted? Was she resentful

of his interference? His thoughts went back to those early days of married life they had spent together, to the terrible wrench of their parting, to the black curtain that had been drawn across their horizon, to the long, dreary, hopeless years when both his soul and body had been in prison. For a moment the old numbed, dazed feeling came back; but he pulled himself together with an effort. He would look forward; they were both still young enough for the future to have some meaning for them. He would win her again.

His sense of humor had helped him through the hell he had suffered, but it was only a cloak to the raw wound in his soul. His children were splendid; he adored them. Even Arthur had qualities that appealed, though difficult to fathom. But Amelia was the whole world to him, and without her love life would be a very drab and profitless affair. He needed great tact; and tact was scarcely his long suit. He was too direct, too analytical; he probed too much, took too little for granted—and too much. He had too many theories; he looked too much for motives. He must be a very difficult person to live with. This habit of his of looking at things from every point of view—a habit that eventually only confirmed his own—must irritate and at times exasperate a woman accustomed to accepting things at their face value. He had so dreaded appearing a

martyr that he had perhaps overdone the attitude he had chosen. Could Amelia think he was without feeling, that he was actually making fun of tragedy? His sense of irony might be misunderstood and labeled facetiousness. He hated facetiousness. Life was ironical, and one must accept the fact. His imagination made him see Amelia's point of view. She had courageously faced the tragedy and had brought up her children with care and tenderness. That was a wonderful feat. She had hidden her grief so that they should be happy; she had tried to live a natural and ordinary life so that they should remain in ignorance of the tragedy that had darkened hers. She had the woman's genius for giving, the selflessness that can be found even in selfish women. He had been in prison for fifteen years—for another man's crime. Had she, too, not been in prison at his bidding? There had always been a warder outside in the corridor to warn her of the rules and regulations that hampered her, that a break in the rules would lead to publicity—and shame for her children. She had kept her youth in spite of everything. Was she to be denied all admiration and the comradeship of men? There must have been times when she had longed to rid herself of all responsibility, to forget, and to snatch a counterfeit happiness. She was responsive; she had always been amazingly responsive. She must

have suffered—terribly. The loneliness, the isolation, the knowledge that any any moment her children might stumble on the truth! Looked at from an unesthetic point of view, had his sufferings been any more dreadful than hers? He had had to live a life of routine, of soul-deadening monotony; he had writhed at the realization of wasted life entailed by the prison system. Criminals should be treated as sick men—mentally and morally unfit; they should be treated psychologically. Atmosphere would have helped them. But the atmosphere of a prison was death to any latent germ of hope or of determination to seek higher ideals. Instead of treating that part of the brain that was diseased, the criminal was treated as an automaton. He was no longer a man; he was a number. The prison uniform alone destroyed what remained of a man's self-respect.

To imagine suffering—especially another's suffering—was almost worse than actual suffering itself. What must Amelia's thoughts have been? How she must have dreaded the long, nerve-shattering nights when her imagination had had full play? She must have seen him in her mind's eye—chained, sullen, losing touch with humanity. The bravery of men was spasmodic, the result of training, of impulse, of fear of being thought a coward, elemental, chivalrous, philosophical; but the bravery of women was fundamental—a thing

to wonder at, to make a man feel very humble. A woman would scream at a mouse, or run miles to avoid a cow; but she would face the pangs of childbirth without exposing her fears to her husband, and a life that at any moment might crumble, as Amelia had done, with a smile on her face, and an acceptance of the small social duties —for the sake of her children. Yes; women were braver than men. No doubt there were women who shirked responsibilities, women who purposely went childless, but they were on a par with conscientious objectors and other imitation men; women who denied their sex, its privileges and punishment, and thought only of their own comforts. They were worse than the women of the streets; they were welshers. They refused to pay for what they had taken; they were defaulters, and should be treated as such. And there were men of the same breed.

Yes, life was very puzzling—and very interesting. Problems were set to be solved; and he was face to face with an extremely perplexing one. So much depended upon his present attitude. He could win—or lose—everything by what he did; not so much by what he decided to do, but by what he actually did—from instinct, on impulse, naturally.

He went over to Amelia and sat beside her on

the couch. "Amelia," he said, taking her hand, "is n't it time we spoke of ourselves?"

She avoided him imperceptibly, and shrank a little more into herself. "We have been speaking of ourselves, more or less, all the evening," she protested.

"Are you angry with me for sending your friend away?" inquired John gently.

"No; not for that," she replied, her eyes fixed on the rug, her voice low but distinct.

"For what, then?" asked John, somewhat puzzled.

Amelia turned to him and withdrew her hand. "I don't know that I can tell you," she answered.

"Then how am I to understand?" he inquired in some perplexity.

"You *should* understand; it 's your inability to understand that—that hurts me," she said.

"My dear," he protested, "do n't let 's quarrel!"

He took her hand and squeezed it.

"That is n't understanding me, John; it 's merely—petting me."

"Why should n't I pet you?" he asked, letting go her hand and facing her.

"Why should you?" She spoke a little bitterly. "Since you came back have you shown any desire to—to pet me? Have you shown any feeling

other than a wish to score off poor Seppy and to assert yourself as my husband?"

John sighed—a perplexed, humorous, protesting sigh. "My dear! Are n't you deliberately trying to make trouble between us?"

Amelia echoed his sigh. Of course, he could n't understand; she had realized that he could n't. But—oh, if he only could!

"I suppose a man's hatred of unessentials keeps him from saying more than is absolutely necessary," he said.

"To a woman nothing is unessential," replied Amelia quietly. "The more details she has to play with in her mind, the nearer she can get to the truth."

"While a man fishes out the truth from a mass of details and freezes on to it," said John.

"Oh, John!" she cried. "Philosophy comes more easily to a man than it does to a woman, but women have to learn it in a harder school."

He kissed her hand chivalrously. He knew she had spoken the truth. "My dear! We have both had to learn philosophy," he said.

Amelia rose and walked toward the window. "I am too much of a rebel to be a real philosopher," she protested.

A woman frequently seeks her ideals in artificial fiction as a protest against the dryness of reality. She wanted to be understood; she wanted still

more to be carried off her feet; she most decidedly did not want to sit on a couch with her husband, exchanging platitudes. She wished he were not so chivalrous. Too much chivalry was as nauseating as too much artificial fiction: it chained the natural man and kept him silent.

John puzzled over the situation. Was he still to remain merely a privileged visitor? Could nothing break down the barrier that divided them? He spoke of Arthur and Chloe, and a check was written, to be sent in the morning. Amelia agreed to everything he suggested.

Olive came in from saying good-by to Jordan, a little flushed, but very thrilled. Jordan had been obliged to run to catch his train, she explained; he had said good-by so many times that she feared he would miss it. It was great fun being engaged. She drank some cold tea and looked at her father and mother sympathetically. It was strange to see them together, but rather comforting. Arthur was married, she herself was engaged, Jimmy was at school; it would be nice for them to have each other to talk to and to exchange ideas with. Being engaged made one sympathetic toward everyone.

"I 'm rather tired; I shall go to bed," said Amelia. She went over to John and offered her forehead. He kissed her. She shivered a little and went up to her room.

It was a comfortable room, spacious, luxuriously furnished, with plenty of light. She undressed slowly, and spent some time in brushing her hair. She looked at herself in the mirror.

She looked very young in her kimono, with her hair down; it was beautiful hair, and she was justly proud of it. She was tall, slim, and extremely pretty. No one would guess her age, seeing her thus. Age was purely a matter of thought. She sat for a long while, her chin resting on her hands, her elbows on the dressing-table, gazing at her reflection critically.

Presently—quite half an hour later—she went to the door and opened it. How still everything was! Olive must have gone to bed. The lights were out in the hall. John must have retired, too; or perhaps he was sitting in the dark—thinking.

She drew her kimono about her and softly descended the stairs.

CHAPTER XXII

The nightingale's full-throated melody
That thrills beneath the magic of the moon.
Pro Patria, Act 4.

"YOUR mother seems a little upset about something," said John, after Amelia had gone upstairs.

"Naturally," replied Olive. She looked at her father. Were all men so slow in the uptake where women were concerned? Would she herself find it necessary to be exasperatingly direct in her dealings with Jefferson? Perhaps a man's imagination found it difficult to follow his wife's mental processes. Oh, well! If men could n't see things, they should have them pointed out.

"Don't you understand what it is, father?" she inquired.

John frowned. "Do you mean about Seppy?" he asked.

"Good heavens, no!" said Olive, smiling. "Mother did n't *really* care for Seppy, though he was very useful." She sat on the arm of the Chesterfield. "I mean about *you,* father!"

"What about me?" inquired her father, puzzled, but anxious to learn.

"Don't you realize what it means to her to have you home?" she replied, answering his question with another.

John lit a cigarette. "I wish I *could* realize exactly what it *did* mean to her," he said.

The conversation had to become intimate, and Olive had all the younger generation's horror of too much intimacy; she could stand hard facts, and liked to call a spade a spade, but only in an impersonal fashion. "Why, father! Don't you see?" she cried. "Mother loves you so much that it 's making her rather jumpy!"

John drew a quick breath. "Do you mean that?" he asked, a little unsteadily.

"Of course I do," said Olive. "I thought you knew. But you are so polite to her, so gentle, it made me wonder whether you really loved her, or whether you were only pretending to."

John looked at his daughter, amazement written in his face.

"I understand what you have been through, what you must have suffered," said Olive quickly. "I 've been a little worried myself," she added, coloring a little. "I was very fond of Jeff; only —I did n't know whether he was fond of *me*. And, because I did n't know, I 've been so offhand with him he did n't dare tell me. I suppose I 'm a woman—in spite of my education," she reflected ruefully. "I expect mother is a little like

me. She is n't sure; and she has been afraid to take the lid off the kettle, lest it should boil over, or—" She hesitated, and glanced at her father.

"Or what?" inquired John eagerly.

"Lest it should be—cold," replied Olive in a low voice.

"Cold?" he echoed, almost in a whisper. "Cold?" Good Lord!"

"You see, father," continued Olive, determined to see it through, "it was n't as though you had been a soldier who had been killed in action." She shuddered unconsciously. Supposing Jefferson—

She pulled herself together and continued bravely. "Then pride in your sacrifice would have helped her to bear the long, cruel, lonely years. But you were alive—though dead to her; alive—and she could n't see you, could n't hear your voice, could do nothing *for* you. But love like hers could n't be killed by sorrow; she must have wanted you so. I think she would have died—if it had n't been for us. We have been horrid to her—sometimes. I suppose most children are rather heartless. When she was quivering with rebellion, and with longing for *you,* we pretended she was just nervous."

John suddenly realized how his attitude must have hurt Amelia, how he had seemed to have accepted everything and had made no effort to

pull down the mythical wall that had divided them. Amelia must have thought him heartless, coldly courteous, almost a stranger. And it had all been a mask, deliberately assumed, for fear of letting her learn the truth. How easily misunderstandings arose! How hard they were to clear up! And here was his daughter, a girl of eighteen, almost a child, a baby when he had last seen her, pointing out to him the mistakes he had made. "Good Lord!" he cried, almost in a whisper.

"When you came home—so miraculously, so unexpectedly—and you treated her so chivalrously, almost like a stranger" ("My own phrase," cried John to himself; "it 's true, it 's true!"), "I think she must have felt as though a hand of ice was clutching her heart—and freezing it."

"What must I seem to her?" cried John. "Fifteen years of darkness and impotence don't add to a man's youth—when he is without hope."

Olive smiled. "You have the gift of laughter, which is denied to most women," she said. "I mean, the ability to laugh at yourself. Laughter destroys bitterness, does n't it?"

John's eyes narrowed; he remembered some terrible hours. "There were nights when I fought with the beasts of doubt and despair; nights when I could see no hope, no justice, nothing but pitiless

irony; nights when I battered my head against the walls and cursed the God of the Christians."

Olive looked up wonderingly. "And in the morning you laughed?" she whispered.

"Yes," said her father, "I laughed." For, as he had watched the first faint glimmer of daylight creep through the bars of his prison, he had seen a vision of cities peopled with little men—strutting, serious, important, self-complacent, and of women smiling at their vanity; he had seen the lavish panorama of beauty that nature had provided for their enjoyment. The vision became a cinematograph, the pictures constantly changing. The possibilities of the average man were almost limitless, but his actions proved him a little man in a big world. Some men wore ermine robes and coronets, and wigs and top-hats, and surrounded themselves with the treasures of the earth in order to prove their greatness; others spoke at great length in dignified chambers and in public places, but out of their mouths came pebbles that they thought were pearls; some wore swords and spurs and tried to look terrifying; others chains of office in which they tried to look impressive; some smoked big cigars and allowed shriekingly vulgar gold chains to stretch across their swelling stomachs as they lolled back in thousand-guinea cars; others, spectacled and thin-lipped, added up rows of figures and entered the results in great books,

and smiled joyously to see their industry rewarded; some shook their fists at the palaces of the rich; others held their handkerchiefs to their noses when passing the hovels of the poor; some sat on their land, and in consideration of huge payments, allowed some privileged persons to sit on small sections of it for seven or fourteen or twenty-one years, after which all improvements belonged to the landlord; others walked round and round their picture galleries, gazing at their ancestors and dreading contact with the common herd; some spent the nights in tasting the forbidden delights of the underworld, others in prowling the streets for plunder; some built high walls and sat behind them, others built towers of folly and danced on the summits; some climbed snow-covered mountains, crossing terrible crevasses and glaciers moving with the rapidity of a four-wheeled cab, for the sake of the kudos to be obtained; others hacked and delved through forests and jungles, along fevered rivers and misamic swamps, in order to kill some unfortunate beast for the sake of killing it; some, in red coats and ridiculous black caps, rode on horseback, chasing a bored and perplexed fox, and made a hideous noise in the process; others, attired in wonderful coats with large pockets, attended by keepers, surrounded by vacuous villagers who made loud noises to disturb some startled birds, dealt death

and mutilation among the feathered kingdom, and entered the result proudly in a book kept for the purpose; some wrote down on paper the truth as they saw it, others wrote what they hoped their admirers would buy; some wrote of the men they had met and the things they had seen, others of the intimacies they had enjoyed with various women, not knowing that they were writing themselves down accursed; some, unable themselves to create, criticized the creations of their fellows, others made music for the world's delight—and it remained hidden in a drawer; some took pride in building horrible, staring, ugly villas; others dreamed dreams of fairylike buildings which were not considered practical owing to the cost of construction; some thought, others accepted; some laughed, others wept; and, the film exhausted, another day notched to the aggregate score, and the turn of the eternal treadmill to be faced, John had laughed to himself and risen from his plank bed. "I cried for the food of the gods to nourish my understanding, and they brought me skilly!" he exclaimed. "It seemed so typical of life, I could n't *help* laughing!"

"You must n't laugh at mother, dear," said Olive gently. "Women can't bear being laughed at." She kissed his forehead. "Good night, father! I 'm glad we have had this talk." She looked at him reflectively. "I suppose being en-

gaged has cured me of shyness." She turned as she reached the door. "Please remember that mother has loved you—always," she added. "Good night!"

She went out of the room, closing the door. John sat quite still for some minutes; then he switched off the lights, and pulled back the heavy curtains, flooding the room with moonlight. He went back to the couch, and sat in front of the empty fireplace, staring into vacancy. For a long time he sat there, lost in thought. Then the door opened, and Amelia came in. He rose, hearing a movement. She stood quite still, looking at him uncertainly. He drew a deep breath.

"Amelia!" he cried unsteadily. "You look like a ghost—the girl of fifteen years ago—my wife!"

"I came for a book," she explained; "I knew I should n't sleep."

He wheeled a chair round for her. "It 's so late," she protested.

John smiled. "Do you remember?" he asked, a little unsteadily, "do you remember some of those nights when we were too full of plans for the future to be able to sleep, and we used to lie awake—talking and talking and talking? And then, suddenly, I would ask you something, and you did n't answer, and I would find you had fallen asleep—on my shoulder—breathing quietly as a child. And I, hardly daring to move, would

lie there—thanking God in my heart for the miracle of your love."

Amelia trembled. "A woman does n't forget—her glimpses of heaven," she whispered.

"Nor does a man—when he has been down into hell," cried John. "They robbed me of my freedom, and I accepted that; it was unjust, but so is life in human hands. But they robbed me of you—and that I could n't accept. I loved you with every fiber of my being—with my soul; and they could n't kill my longing for you, my need of you. I came back wondering—almost dreading—whether I should still be to you what I was, or whether I should be just a memory."

Amelia looked up. "You were so quiet, so self-contained; I felt you realized that I was growing old, and I fought—fought hard and bitterly against the idea of our coming together again—just as friends, content only with memories. You treated me almost as a stranger, and I was afraid to show you what was in my heart, lest it should embarrass you."

"My dear! My dear!" cried John, taking her hands.

"I wanted to go to you, and to put my arms round you, and to comfort you," said Amelia, a thrill in her voice that made him choke. "I wanted to make up to you for all the years you had been robbed of. But you were so cool, so

full of courteous deference. It stabbed me, it hurt me. And I did n't dare!"

She was quivering all over; he could feel her pulse racing. "We did n't know, we could n't believe," he murmured, biting his lip hard to control his feelings. He was seeing into the hidden places of her soul, and what he saw almost frightened him. He felt strangely humble, curiously triumphant.

"I often longed to break my promise not to come and see you," she told him; "but, for our children's sake, I kept it."

"I thought you felt in your heart that it would be happier for us both if the man you had parted from fifteen years before were dead, and only his shadow remained; that it would be wiser for us to go down the long hill together, with hands clasped in understanding, in friendship, guarding the sanctuary of the love we once worshiped," said John quietly.

Amelia looked up with the frankness of a child, but in her eyes was all the mystery of a woman's devotion. "My love never died; it only slept," she whispered; "it is there—for you—now—just as it always *has* been—if you really want it!"

"I want nothing else—in my life," he cried, and he took her in his arms; their lips met in a long kiss.

She clung to him as she had done that terrible day fifteen years ago, as though she could never let him go again. Youth is eternal while love remains.

After a little while she looked up, listening. "How still it is!" she whispered. Then, with a tiny low gurgle of laughter: "Do you remember," she asked, "how we used to creep round and listen outside the children's rooms—before going to bed—to hear if they were asleep?"

John chuckled. "And nurse said we were spoiling them!"

"Sometimes they needed tucking up," she protested. "What are you thinking of?" she inquired suddenly.

"The first time I heard the patter of little bare feet on the stairs," he said.

"What did you do?" she whispered.

"I held you in my arms—very tight—lest you should see—how it thrilled me."

Amelia sighed deeply. "They have grown up and we have grown—old."

"You can't grow old—when you love," he replied, holding her in his arms.

She moved over to the door, and he followed. A light was burning in the hall. She mounted the stairs, and turned to look at her husband. He smiled.

"Let's pretend they are still tiny," she whispered, "and that we are still—young."

He switched off the light in the hall, and joined her. Their hands met as they went slowly upstairs. In the woods beyond the drive, a nightingale was still singing.

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